Commentary

VOLUME EIGHTY-FIVE • NUMBER TWO • FEBRUARY 1988

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Commentary

VOLUME 85 NUMBER TWO *FEBRUARY 1988*

Symposium 21 American Jews and Israel

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Letters from Readers

Heterosexuals & AIDS

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In a land teetering on the brink of hysteria over the present AIDS epidemic, Michael A. Fumento's article, "AIDS: Are Heterosexuals at Risk?" [November 1987], stands as a cool voice of reason and probity amid the din of the generally bleak and apocalyptic AIDS stories with which we are almost daily bombarded. By exposing many of the misrepresentations, half-truths, and outright lies which have come to surround the disease (deceptions which the media are in no small measure responsible for perpetrating), Mr. Fumento does much to enhance our understanding of the *reality* of AIDS while at the same time allaying many of the groundless fears which are becoming increasingly prevalent within the nation's heterosexual community.

One of the most important yet least asked questions in the AIDS debate is, why the deception? Further, why the seemingly concerted effort among gay and lesbian groups, scientists, public-health officials (including our own Surgeon General), condom manufacturers, and . . . the media to " 'democratize' this plague"? I have long wondered in dismay at the push to make AIDS into an Everyman's Disease, when the facts continue to prove otherwise.

As Mr. Fumento's article makes convincingly clear, despite the wishful thinking of many persons in this country and throughout the world, AIDS has never been, nor is it now, a heterosexual disease which through some "fluke" emerged with a vengeance among the gay community. The primary risk groups are, as they have always been, homosexual males and intravenous (IV) drug users and their sexual partners. This is the reality of the disease, a reality determined by the nature of the virus and its bloodborne modes of transmission.

It is the duty of the aforementioned organizations, particularly the media, to inform the public of the reality of the present situation regarding AIDS, its transmission, and its primary risk groups. It is not their duty to whip the public into a frenzy of paranoia and distrust, which they have thus far succeeded wonderfully in doing, in order somehow to increase a sense of community social responsibility and compassion for the victims of this horrible disease. As Mr. Fumento remarks in closing: "Every dollar spent, every commercial made, every health warning released, that does not specify promiscuous anal intercourse and needle-sharing as the overwhelming risk factors in the transmission of AIDS is a lie, a waste of funds and energy, and a cruel diversion."

Indeed, unless the present course of disinformation about AIDS is halted, there is the very real danger of a backlash of outrage by the heterosexual community against not only those messengers of doom who continued to predict a devastating heterosexual epidemic which never came to pass, but also, sadly, against the victims themselves. Mr. Fumento is to be congratulated for his moral and intellectual honesty in his treatment of the subject.

THOMAS D. GORDON
Dania, Florida

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Michael A. Fumento has written the first sensible article about the AIDS epidemic to appear in either the medical or the lay literature. My only disappointment is that he wrote the article I have been trying to write for the past year. I can claim to have written letters to the New York *Times* (never published) and the New York State Commissioner of Health (never acknowledged) in which I made the same point (i.e., the disease is transmitted mainly by anal intercourse and dirty needles, and that the targets of the "education" campaign were all wrong). I did receive an acknowledgment of the letter I wrote to Dr. Stephen Joseph, New York City Commissioner of Health, but he blithely dismissed my assertions and maintained that his department was "promoting effective preventive measures and [was] beginning to reach groups of particularly vulnerable segments of our population—*women* and young adults" (emphasis added). It is of great interest that in his reply to me he never mentioned anal intercourse, although that is what I wrote him about. He never even mentioned homosexual men.

Mr. Fumento does well to bring up the connection among hepatitis B and venereal diseases (now called sexually-transmitted diseases, STDs) and AIDS. The connection between

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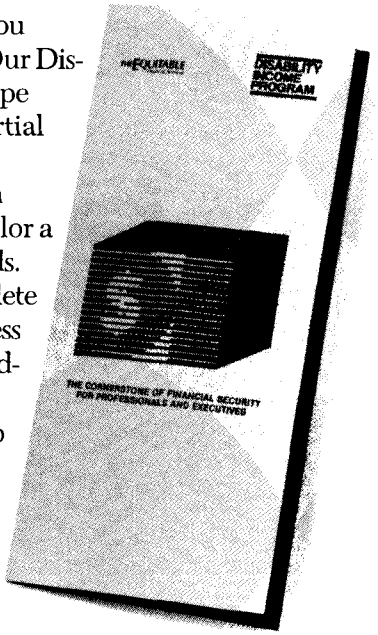

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hepatitis and homosexual (anal) intercourse was recognized many years before the first cases of AIDS were described. . . .

The extreme reluctance of public officials to face up to the real epidemiological problems of AIDS is testimony to the political power of homosexuals and their allies. When "Typhoid Mary" was spreading typhoid fever around New York City at the turn of the century, nobody talked about educating the public, confidentiality, and civil rights. The public-health officials simply quarantined her until she submitted to treatment.

Mr. Fumento may even have done the homosexual population a service. If the public can be convinced that the disease will not spread to them as long as they have no sexual contact with homosexuals or drug users, isolation measures may not prove necessary.

Finally, one must agree with his last paragraph. We must continue to help the hapless victims of this dread disease as best we can. . . .

SHERWOOD P. MILLER, M.D.
Merrick, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Congratulations on Michael A. Fumento's article, a lucid, factual assessment. One can no longer expect unbiased information from the Surgeon General, a decent man, who, however, prefers crusades to enlightenment. Meanwhile, the authorities have failed to do two helpful things in their power: (1) decriminalizing the sale of unused needles (forbidding the sale without prescription induces addicts to become AIDS victims as well by reusing needles) and (2) punishing severely, and thereby possibly deterring, infected persons who expose others to infection. Such persons certainly deserve punishment.

Our courts seem to regard spreading AIDS as a civil right. They insist, for instance, that infected hemophiliac children—who by definition bleed easily and copiously—go to school with uninfected children. The Surgeon General is concerned with telling schoolchildren that anal intercourse is no more risky than normal intercourse. Homosexuals are not to be offended at the expense of truth. The issue has become politicized. This can only aggravate and prolong the epidemic.

ERNEST VAN DEN HAAG
Fordham University
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In his otherwise sensible and enlightening article about some of the dubious statistics spun out of the AIDS crisis, Michael A. Fumento, alas, passes along a few himself. He quotes a 1981 study to the effect that AIDS victims at age thirty-five had an average of 61 sexual partners a year and projects that to a total of 1,098 partners since age seventeen. The extrapolation is debatable: while most men's sex drive is strongest in youth, lack of nerve and lack of opportunity tend to limit the frequency of their activity until they get a little older, so the true totals were almost certainly smaller. Moreover, was there absolutely no overlap between each year's 61 partners and the previous year's? Mr. Fumento does not say, and I do not know how the researchers could tell—or the survey subjects themselves, for that matter. For one thing, frankly, if you are that promiscuous, you may not even realize you have been with someone before.

The really spurious assertion, however, is the one that follows: "If each partner was equally promiscuous, the size of the pool of partners and partners-once-removed comes to a staggering 1,205,604." Sure. But that is not 1,205,604 different people; it is the same much smaller pool of contacts counted over and over. After all, if two AIDS victims living in the same city frequented the same bars and bathhouses to achieve their liaisons, it stands to reason that many of their partners—to say nothing of partners-once-removed—will have been the same. And that is exactly what AIDS researchers have found.

To be sure, none of this invalidates Mr. Fumento's salient central point: that sexually-transmitted AIDS remains primarily a disease of the homosexual community and is chiefly a result of a few particular practices preferred by homosexuals.

WILLIAM A. HENRY III
Plainfield, New Jersey

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

COMMENTARY is to be praised for Michael A. Fumento's article on the surprising lack of evidence of the spread of AIDS among heterosexuals.

The actual facts seem to be typified by the case of Elizabeth Prophet. She was a San Francisco prostitute and drug user who had been documented as having AIDS by 1977, perhaps earlier. She continued to work on the streets until her death in May 1987.

The first heterosexual cases of AIDS in San Francisco may be dated to about November 1984, when two cases were found. By March 1987, this had grown to 14, seven men and seven women. None of these can be traced to Prophet or to any other prostitute. Since the rule of thumb is that about half the cases will show symptoms within three to five years after infection, we should by now be able to get a fair picture of how many people Prophet infected. The present data suggest either none or very close to none.

As of November 7, 1986, in the entire U.S., 75 males and 381 females were reported to have been heterosexually infected here. . . .

No doubt AIDS still has some surprises left in store for us. But on the basis of present data, it must be said that women may become victims, but they are not much of a hazard as transmitters, except in the case of pregnancy. . . .

BRUCE TYLER
Sacramento, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Michael A. Fumento's article demonstrates intellectual excellence, a compelling sense of social responsibility, and the uncommon courage to make a public statement that runs hard against the dominant views concerning the etiology and epidemiology of AIDS. Reflecting extensive research and thoughtful exposition, Mr. Fumento's . . . article is both timely and welcome. . . . It enable[s] us to direct our attention to issues that are crucial to understanding the etiology of homosexuality which, paradoxically, have gone largely undiscussed.

Foremost among them, as Warren Gadpaille has shown ("Research Into the Physiology of Maleness and Femaleness," *Archives of General Psychiatry*, March 1972), is that heterosexuality is established in fetal life among biologically normal individuals (the vast preponderance, including homosexuals). No evidence exists demonstrating that homosexuality (or other deviant sexual behaviors) is inherited. Indeed, mere common sense suggests that homosexuality is not inherited from heterosexual parents. Nor is it learned behavior—from whom did the first homosexual learn to be homosexual, and

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why? And it is least of all chosen (an "orientation"), for the painful costs of peer rejection and ridicule during pre-adolescent and later years vastly outweigh the benefits of being homosexual. . . .

There is, however, ample evidence from Bieber, Ovesey, Socarides, and others unequivocally showing that homosexuality is a psychopathology. . . . Furthermore, . . . homosexuality can be—and has been—cured in those who want to change, are young enough to be able to respond to therapy, and whose therapists understand and know how to treat the underlying psychodynamics of this psycho-sexual pathology, as some do not.

The overriding issue about human sexuality today, therefore, is not the AIDS epidemic, as perilous as it is, but the prevention of homosexuality through sound parental behavior supported by the media and popular culture, emphasizing the paramount value of marriage and family. . . . These fundamental human states are infinitely more preferable than a life of sexual promiscuity, a disturbingly high rate of sexually-transmitted diseases and alcoholism, and much inner unhappiness. The pervasiveness of these afflictions among homosexuals prompts the question of why those suffering from them remain homosexual—if homosexuality is a result of choice.

EDWARD M. LEVINE
Evanston, Illinois

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

It was with great dismay and surprise that I read Michael A. Fumento's article, "AIDS: Are Heterosexuals at Risk?" . . .

To say, as Mr. Fumento does, that "the supposed spread of AIDS into the general population illustrate[s] the old saying about lies, damn lies, and statistics" is a meaningless cliché.

Mr. Fumento tries very hard to convince us that the heterosexual spread of AIDS is nothing to be concerned about. He cites specific articles—many of which would appear to have been irresponsibly planted in the medical literature—to justify his preconceived supposition. But he totally ignores articles by Dr. Margaret Fischl of Miami, who has a large clinic of heterosexuals, and who has demonstrated that unprotected sexual relations between one who is infected and one uninfected result in an 80-percent spread of the virus within two years. He also ignores the recent study by Baltimore's Health Director, reported in the *AMA News* in October 1987, which shows that 40 percent of patients with a positive Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) test going through the Sexually Transmitted Disease Clinic have no risk factors and are therefore to be considered as cases of heterosexual spread of the virus.

There are references in the article to Randy Shilts's book, *And the Band Played On*, but Mr. Fumento neglects to quote from that part of the book where Shilts states that in New York City in 1985, of heterosexually active males with no other risk factors, 3 percent carry the virus.

Mr. Fumento is able to write off the epidemic in Africa with suggestions that the causes are contaminated needles, scarification, and blood transfusions and to conclude that the devastating epidemic in Africa is not a result of the heterosexual spread of the disease.

America today faces the greatest threat that we have ever encountered. But the enemy is within our society, not outside it. The enemy is not the virus itself, for if we started using standard public-health techniques we could bring this epidemic under control. The enemy consists of those irresponsible people who seem intent upon keeping us from using responsible public-health techniques: testing, public-health follow-up and education for those infected, and the use of the force of law against irresponsible people who are intentionally spreading a deadly disease. For some reason some people seem to be intent upon confusing the American people and keeping them asleep until it is too late.

I regret to say that this article fits into the category of ". . . lies, damn lies, and statistics."

STANLEY K. MONTEITH, M.D.
Chairman, Mid-Coast AIDS
Resource Center
Santa Cruz, California

MICHAEL A. FUMENTO writes:

Both Thomas D. Gordon and Sherwood P. Miller speak of a backlash against homosexuals, resulting from the "disinformation" that AIDS is spreading to the heterosexual community. There is no doubt that this is a real phenomenon: according to a report by the National Gay Task Force, among anti-homosexual acts committed in 1986, "Reference to AIDS was made by the perpetrators in 14 percent . . . of the total number of incidents, including 5 percent of physical assaults."

Ernest van den Haag advocates decriminalizing the sale of needles to reduce needle-sharing by addicts. Some may rightly flinch at the thought of providing people with instruments enabling them to engage in illegal and immoral acts, but it must be conceded that education in the form of pamphlets, posters, and lectures has had and will continue to have a limited effect on so heedless a population as this. Local public-health officials I have spoken to in the cities hardest hit by AIDS unanimously support the issuing of free needles, or of bleach with which to clean used ones. New York, however, the state with the highest number of IV-drug-user AIDS cases, and consequently the highest number of IV-drug-related heterosexual-transmission cases, refuses to issue clean needles (this, mind you, is the same state that came close to mandating instruction in the use of condoms in fourth-grade classrooms).

More methadone programs for drug abusers would also be valuable, although it should be noted that methadone is only effective against one injectable drug, heroin. Amazingly, the chief of drug-dependency treatment at the New York Veterans Administration Medical Center has publicly sneered at needle distribution and increased methadone programs on the grounds that neither addresses the problem of heterosexual AIDS transmission.

Whatever the merits of William A. Henry III's theory concerning the frequency of homosexual activity, the figures I presented were not mine but those of Dr. Harold Jaffe, chief epidemiologist at the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), as given in the August 1983 *Annals of Internal Medicine*. From the wording of the article, it would appear that the extrapolation was made on the basis of the total number of partners divided by years of sexual activity, although, logically, it would seem more useful to inquire into year-by-year contacts and extrapolate from those. At any rate, when dealing with numbers this high, surely the figures given by individual patients are nothing but educated guesses. (The overlap factor is a point I thought too obvious to belabor.) Whatever the exact numbers, a highly promiscu-

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ous individual having sex with other highly promiscuous individuals creates an enormous disease pool. No wonder that in 1981 one doctor (quoted in Randy Shilts's book) said, "I[f] something new gets loose here, we're going to have hell to pay."

Stanley K. Monteith asserts that my article "fits into the category of . . . lies, damn lies, and statistics," yet he does not contest a single statistic. The Fischl study he alludes to was presented at the Third International Conference on AIDS and was in fact a subset of a larger study of 45 couples. I referred to the general study in my article, in citing evidence indicating a correlation between HIV seroconversion (testing positive for HIV) and infection with other STDs.

One problem with Dr. Monteith's use of the Fischl study is that it was so small: only 17 participants (the other 28 out of the 45 couples included those who used condoms, abstained from sex, or were seropositive at the beginning of the study). The smaller the survey sample, the more likely there is to be distortion in results. Other small studies have had completely different results: one Arkansas study, for example, found no evidence of seroconversion among eight steady heterosexual partners of seropositive individuals; another study, in England, found no seroconversions out of 14. But whatever the variance among small surveys, those with a greater number of participants invariably show lower infection rates than those in the Fischl study.

Another salient characteristic of the Fischl cohort is that all of the initially seropositive partners had either AIDS or AIDS-related complex. There is a growing body of evidence that end-stage AIDS victims are more contagious than asymptomatic HIV carriers. For epidemiological purposes, therefore, our concern should focus on these asymptomatic carriers and their partners, since they are the ones who are going to be making most of the sexual contacts, rather than on those whose sex drive is already reduced by illness and whose manifestations of disease are likely to frighten away sexual partners.

Some of the seroconversions in the Fischl study may also have resulted not from intercourse but from needle-sharing, as evidenced by the fact that 63 percent of the partners of IV-drug users (including those Dr. Fischl listed as prostitutes) tested positive for HIV as opposed to only 44 percent of the others. In other studies, partners of seropositive IV-drug users have shown a significantly higher seroconversion rate than partners of hemophiliacs, transfusion recipients, or bisexuals. Some epidemiologists, such as the CDC's Alexander D. Langmuir, believe that many individuals who claim that their only high-risk activity has been sexual intercourse with an IV-drug user are in fact sharing needles with those partners.

For all these reasons, Dr. Fischl's study cannot be cited as the definitive study of the heterosexual transmission of AIDS. Nor has anyone come up with any partner study to refute Dr. Nancy Padian's finding (cited in my article) that on average it takes more than 1,000 contacts for a man to infect a woman heterosexually. To the extent, then, that heterosexual transmission *is* a problem, casual sex is not the culprit; heterosexual transmission is altogether too inefficient to sustain a widespread heterosexual AIDS epidemic in this country.

Dr. Monteith chides me for ignoring a Baltimore study, which is currently being used by a Washington, D.C. area blood-testing clinic to terrify heterosexuals into shelling out their money for needless tests; well, this study happens to have come out after my article appeared, but it should be ignored anyway. Once again, of the various studies performed throughout the country, Dr. Monteith has chosen the most alarming: the percentage of allegedly heterosexually-transmitted HIV-positive cases in Baltimore was several times higher than that found in any other study in any other city. But the study is anomalous in another important respect as well: there were no interviews of tested individuals, or reinterviews of those who tested seropositive. This is significant because of the aforementioned tendency of seropositives and AIDS victims to claim that they have been infected through heterosexual activity or blood transfusions rather than admitting to homosexuality or IV-drug use.

For example, the El Paso County, Colorado, Health Department interviewed 20 seropositive servicemen, of whom 15 originally claimed no high-risk activity. After reinterrogation, all but three admitted either to homosexual acts or IV-drug use. Again, according to Rand Stoneburner, director of AIDS research for the New York City Department of Health, 60 percent of that city's AIDS victims who originally claim contact with prostitutes as their only high-risk exposure later admit either to taking part in homosexual acts or to IV-drug use.

Would those in the Baltimore study lie even when guaranteed anonymity? Certainly. According to federal officials, plans to do survey testing around the country have bogged down because up to one-third of those contacted say they do not trust the government's guarantee of anonymity.

The fallaciousness of the Baltimore study is further attested by Baltimore's present AIDS statistics: as of November 30, 1987, of 331 total cases, only 11 (3.3 percent) could be attributed to heterosexual activity. There is of course a lag between seroconversion and the development of AIDS (although, as I pointed out in my article, this is not as significant as many would like us to think), but it is ludicrous to suppose that in a city where only 3 percent of the AIDS cases are heterosexually transmitted, 40 percent of all HIV carriers got the virus through heterosexual activity.

Whatever his intent, Dr. Monteith appears to concede my point about how the AIDS epidemic in Africa differs from ours. Let me just point out that a new study in Africa indicates that uncircumcised men may have nine and one-half times greater chance of acquiring HIV than circumcised men. Since the great majority of American men of sexually active years have been circumcised, while the reverse is true in many tribes in Africa, this could be yet another factor differentiating the two cases.

According to Dr. Stoneburner, the study referred to in Randy Shilts's book and cited here by Dr. Monteith suffers from the same methodological flaw as the Baltimore study; that is, it was a self-administered questionnaire. Dr. Stoneburner says the doctor who administered the study has since changed his methodology. In any event, I would refer readers to a later study, ongoing since December 1986: as of June 30, 1987, of 440 men tested at an STD clinic in New York City, five (or a little over 1 percent) claimed no other risk than sexual contact with IV-drug users. Two also claimed no

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risk factors at all, but one is suspected of having had homosexual relations and the other of abusing injected drugs. This New York STD study, which was presented as an abstract at the Third International Conference on AIDS, concludes: "In the city with the largest number of heterosexual AIDS patients in the United States, these preliminary results suggest a low prevalence of HIV infection among sexually active heterosexual adults who are not [IV-drug users]." That just about says it all.

Thus, as data continue to accumulate, those who have been predicting a breakout of AIDS into the heterosexual community look ever more wrong. At the close of 1987, the official CDC AIDS figure for heterosexuals was holding firm at a hair below 4 percent. (As I pointed out in my article, this figure is itself inflated by the CDC's arbitrary inclusion of Haitians and Africans in the heterosexual category; without these groups, the figure would be 2 percent.) Even Surgeon General Koop, quietly and slowly, has switched his position.

Still, in the month my article appeared, the federal government spent $4.6 million for an anti-AIDS campaign that did not mention that homosexuals are at higher risk. With federal, state, and local governments continuing to pour tens of millions of dollars into further "AIDS-doesn't-discriminate" campaigns, this is clearly one myth that is going to die hard.

Atonal Music

To the Editor of Commentary:

Thank you for publishing Neil M. Ribe's article, "Atonal Music and Its Limits" [November 1987]. It is a little ironic that I had to turn to Commentary to see in print some of the arguments against and doubts about atonal music that I and many other academic and professional musicians have hitherto been able to express only behind closed doors to trusted loved ones and faithful students.

We musicians are indeed, as Mr. Ribe suggests, "reluctant critically to examine the conceptual foundations of atonality," not necessarily "for fear of lending support to its vocal and often irrational opponents" but, rather, for fear of being branded as hopelessly backward and professionally incompetent. Just as the emperor's subjects did not dare to remark that there might be something funny about his new clothes, musicians do not dare question the validity of a type of music that was unpopular at its conception in the beginning of the century, and that even today few people really like. As Mr. Ribe points out, there are some fundamental problems in the very structure of atonal music which keep it from being a true successor to the tonal system of the past, yet musicians are forced to overlook these problems and are required instead to embrace the modern era without looking back. Our own professional journals would never carry this "unenlightened" article for fear that it might awaken some interest in a case that was settled long ago.

Thus, just as art mimics life, politics in art mimic those in life so that even in the musical world, where one would assume that individuality and personal expression would be especially encouraged, we musicians must depend on an articulate geologist to say what so many of us have been thinking for years.

Lisa Hanford Halasz
Department of Music
Rutgers University
Camden, New Jersey

To the Editor of Commentary:

Although I am not entirely sure that Neil M. Ribe is correct that no musical system is natural without qualification, his article is extremely clear, well-written, and harmonious.

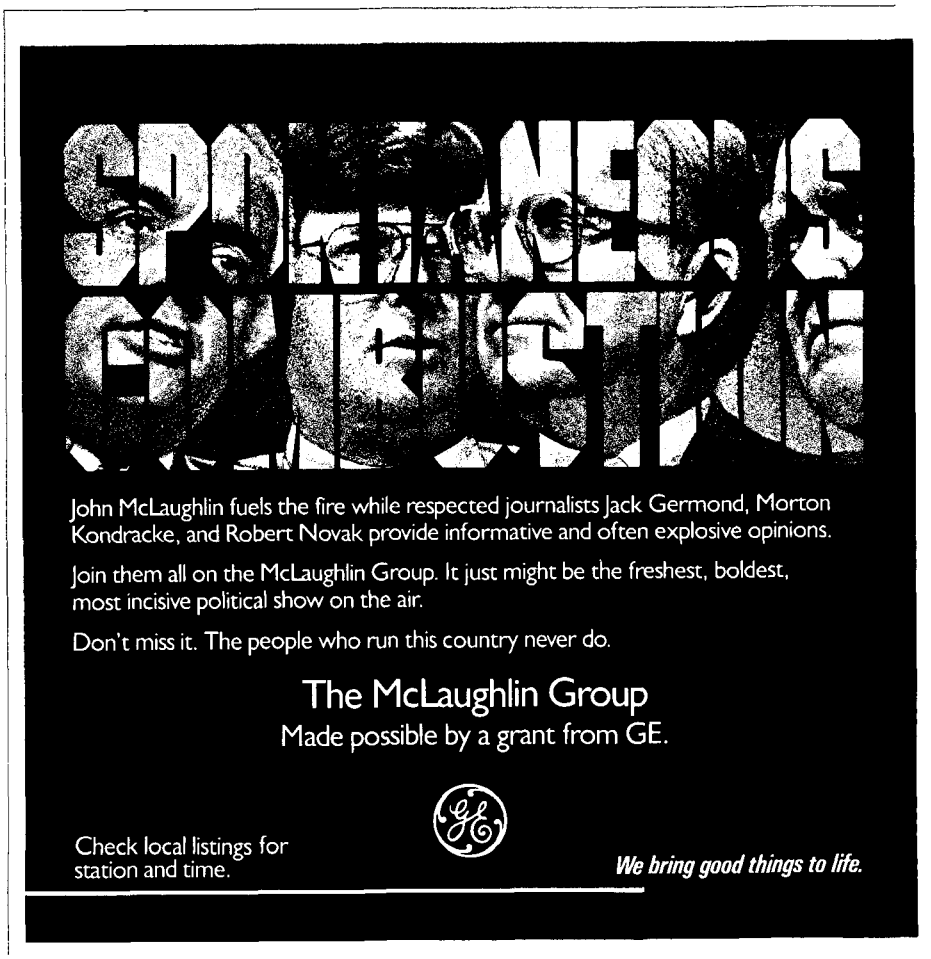
Seth Cropsey
Washington, D.C.

To the Editor of Commentary:

As one who tries to discuss music in intelligent and informative ways, I was most distressed to read Neil M. Ribe's "Atonal Music and Its Limits." . . .

Mr. Ribe's definition of tonality as a "musical idiom in which all pitches are organized in relation to a central pitch, or 'tonal center,'" and the subsequent description of atonality as an idiom which "lacks" this focus (whereby Mr. Ribe weaves his idea of the system's deficiencies into its very definition) is excruciatingly incomplete. But as one progresses to his criticisms of dodecaphony (or twelve-tone technique) one realizes that this was necessary to his thesis.

In fact, tonality is nothing so simple as Mr. Ribe suggests. It is as much a result as it is a source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of the syntax which obtains in any given piece. Volumes have been written on this difficult topic, and yet music theorists are still largely unable to offer any acceptable definition. As Eugene Narmour says, "The fact is that, to date, we simply do not know the set of arguments that justifies our accepting 'tonicness' as axiomatic" (*Beyond Schenkerism*, University of Chicago Press, 1977).

Mr. Ribe's definition, however, would have us believe that a particular pitch within a given collection of pitches is a tonal center merely as a matter of agreement. This completely ignores the fact that it is the syntactical relationships of those other pitches to that central pitch which provide it with its "tonicness." More simply stated, Mozart's Sonata in C Major is in C Major not because of the work's title (i.e., because he said it is), but rather because he chose that particular harmonic field whose syntax defines the pitch C as a tonal center. *How* that particular field centers on C is still not known to us; *that* it does so is clear even to the most uneducated listener.

This is important because Mr. Ribe's incomplete definition allows him then to proceed to a discussion of intervals in an attempt to defend the "naturalness" of tonality. He posits the idea of the octave as a "natural measure" in music, it being the "most consonant" interval. It is by this "natural measure," Mr. Ribe suggests, that the quality of all other intervals is judged. This is completely untenable, of course, and the reader will note that he makes no serious attempt to defend it. Rather, he writes that the sound of the octave is "so familiar that we seldom pause to reflect on how strange it is that the octave exists at all." In this way Mr. Ribe is attempting to give the interval a kind of magical, supernal status, when it is in fact an entirely predictable and simple acoustical phenomenon, as are all intervals. This all rings rather suspiciously of the mysticism inherent in Heinrich Schenker's concept of *Ursatz* in music, a static harmonic structure which Schenker claimed exists in the "background" of all "great" music. And great music, by definition of the *Ursatz*, must be tonal music, specifically of the Central Northern European variety. . . .

Mr. Ribe then discusses the two intervals just below the octave in his hierarchy, the perfect fifth and perfect fourth. He points to the five-note or pentatonic scale, and the fact that the ancient Chinese recognized that "the notes of this scale are obtained by ascending in fifths (or descending in fourths) from a given pitch." This is true, if one arbitrarily stops after five such superimposed fifths or fourths. What Mr. Ribe does not tell us is that if one continues to twelve, one will have constructed a twelve-note scale; in fact, the very same twelve-note scale that Schoenberg—and for that matter Bach—employed.

More importantly, the need to look for such hypothetical generative structures is proof of Narmour's statement (the ancient Chinese may have been the first to do this but they were certainly not the last). We do not understand how the syntax of the scale itself defines its tonal center, so when we discover that the scale also consists of ascending fifths we feign greater understanding—as if this were a meaningful realization. . . .

Next Mr. Ribe turns to the medieval *organum* to defend the privileged position of the fourth and fifth, as this music consisted almost entirely of those intervals. What he again does not tell us is that in the music of the Renaissance, such as that of Lassus and Palestrina, the fourth separated from its tandem relationship to the fifth and was treated as a dissonance, requiring . . . resolution downward to the third. This omission denies the all-important fact that the definition of dissonance has changed through history.

Indeed, Mr. Ribe seems to be defending the "naturalness" of tonality by way of the alleged "naturalness" of consonance, as if the two were one and the same. In fact they are not related theoretical issues. A work can be firmly tonal and yet very dissonant. An example which immediately comes to mind are the complex six- and seven-note chords which we have come to accept as a final tonic in popular music and jazz today—harmonies that would have been impossible even a hundred years ago. These are one very clear example of how the terms consonance and dissonance must be defined relative to their historical context (i.e., relative to the period of the music one is examining). It should also demonstrate that consonance and tonality are completely separate questions.

Mr. Ribe's equation of atonality with dodecaphony—he never clearly distinguishes one from the other—creates a false impression. Music which is atonal is not by definition dodecaphonic. "Stravinsky," says Mr. Ribe, "managed to be highly innovative while remaining within a recognizably tonal context." But would he care to identify a tonal center in *The Rite of Spring*, or for that matter in many passages of *The Firebird* or *Les Noces*? I would venture to guess not. Yet these are works from Stravinsky's earliest, most innovative, period, long before he began to use dodecaphonic techniques. Consider as well the work of many younger composers. Ligeti, Penderecki, Henze, Crumb, and others have eschewed completely the techniques of dodecaphony, and yet composed in distinctly atonal idioms. . . .

Nor is it the case that all twelve-tone music is uncompromisingly dissonant. Mr. Ribe mentions Alban Berg's *Wozzeck*, but neglects to point out that much of its harmony is triadic or tonal, something I should think would please him. Berg's *Violin Concerto*, a lush and lyrical work, also uses a row which is intentionally triadic. The Italian dodecaphonist Dallapiccola often chose twelve-tone rows which provided him with triadic verticalities.

That dodecaphony "fizzled out"—at least with regard to Schoenberg's predictions for it—cannot be denied. . . . But Mr. Ribe's claim that this was due to an inherent "ugliness" in the music, or that its expressive possibilities were limited to psychosis, is entirely specious. The twelve-tone system did not become the harmonic vocabulary of our time because the harmonic "grammar" of tonal music could not be replaced, and that was the mistaken goal of dodecaphony. In fact, the entire development of such a system was, viewed in retrospect, an acknowledgment of the fact that the centuries-old domination of harmony in music was coming to a close. . . .

Many composers, as Mr. Ribe very correctly points out, continue to use the techniques of dodecaphony and its offspring, serialism, in an almost pathetically fixated way, expelling those students who dare come to their lessons with an octave or triad anywhere on the page. They suffer from the delusion, perhaps, that this is itself the stuff of masterworks. They do not see that Anton Webern's music, for example, is great not because of dodecaphony but rather in spite of

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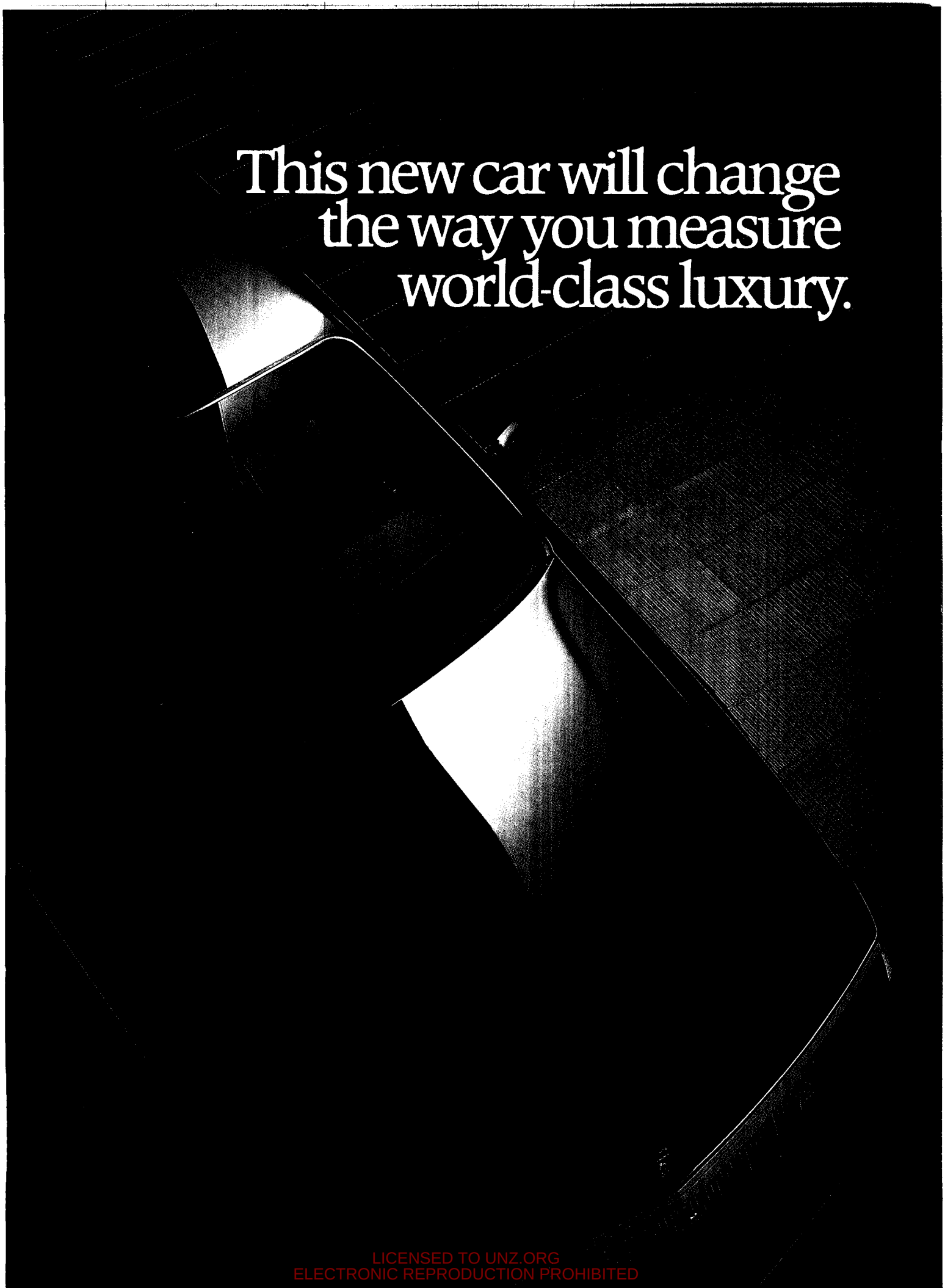

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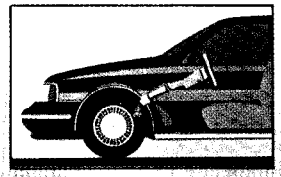

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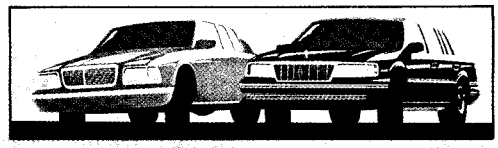

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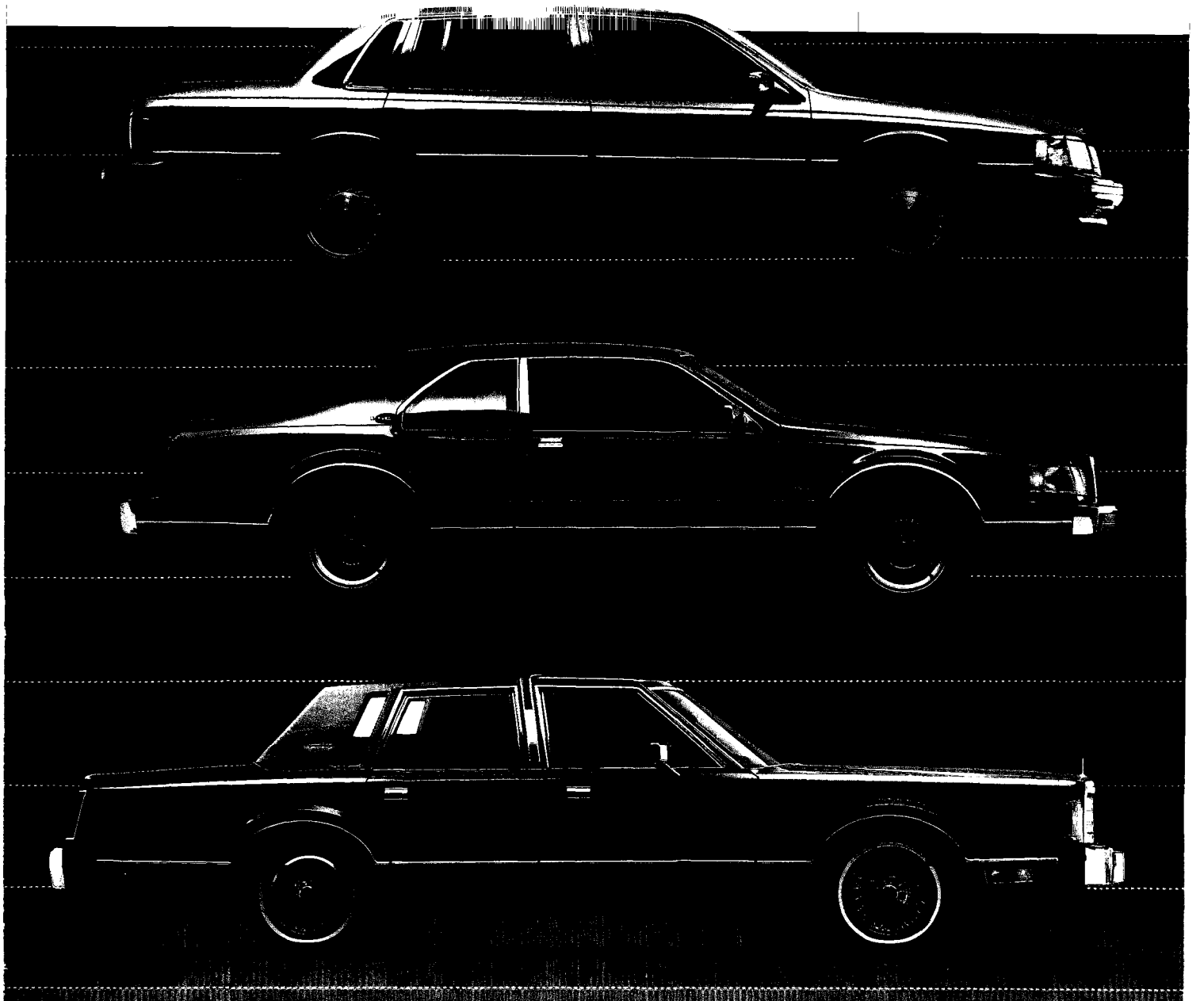

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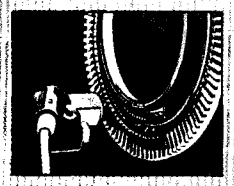

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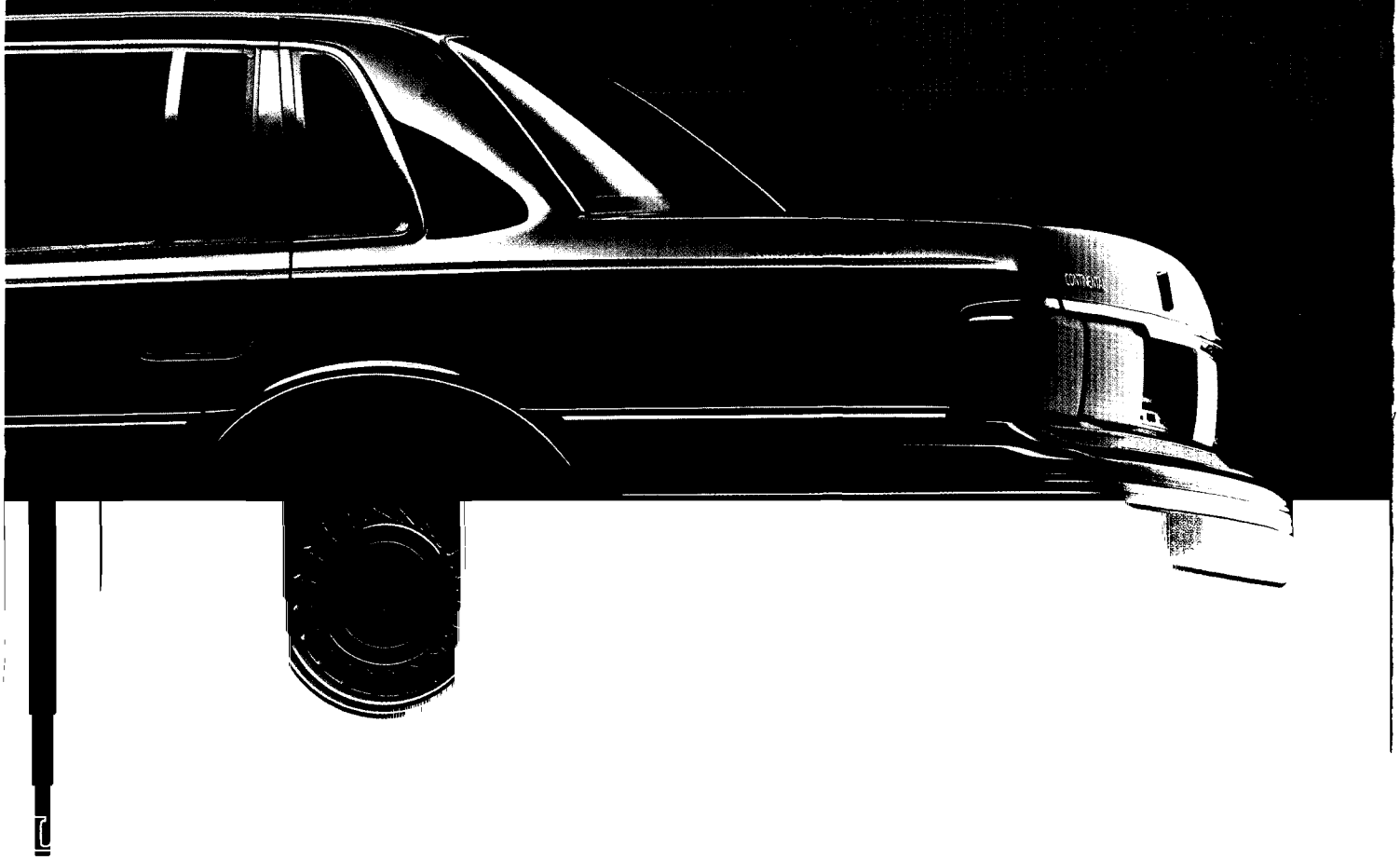

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it—that is, it is great because of Webern. . . .

All of this discussion of harmony and intervals and pitches brings me to perhaps my most important point. The simple fact of the matter is, Schenker's *Ursatz* and Mr. Ribe's "natural measure" notwithstanding, music does not exist only in one vertical dimension, namely, in harmony. The syntax or meaning which a listener perceives in music lies also in its line or melody, its rhythm, its tone color, its instrumentation, dynamics, form, and so forth. Within each of these parameters, some theorists are beginning to discover, as well as within the interactions among different parameters, there exist certain identifiable dialectical structures which either propel the music forward, provide it with its "richness," or do not. . . . The attractiveness of ideas such as Schenker's and Ribe's lies in the very fact that they are actively *un*interested in the diachronic aspects of style, and one can thus apply them to any and all periods of music equally. If the resulting analysis is faulty, say both these concepts, then it is the music which is suspect, and not the theory itself.

It should be clear that I do not disagree with most of Mr. Ribe's criticisms of dodecaphony. The problem is that his supporting arguments are too frequently empty. His views on dissonance and his denial of its changing role throughout history are indefensible. The underlying premise that tonal equates with "accessible" and atonal with "inaccessible" is offensive to the intelligence of the informed reader. Bach was regarded as inaccessible and unnecessarily dissonant in his day, as were Beethoven and Wagner and countless others. Perhaps the problem lies more in the "extreme" or "abnormal" emotions which Mr. Ribe says atonal music expresses?

He feels that atonality has little hope of finding acceptance in the concert hall—yes, he said this in November 1987—for a "simple" reason: "Atonality is not very well suited to expressing things traditionally considered 'beautiful.'" What he means, essentially, is that the composer is ultimately responsible to the tastes of the "Blue-Danube" crowd—a view of the musician-as-lackey which is entirely consistent with his other distinctly 18th-century perspectives.

The purpose of art, I suppose, is to lull us and amuse us, to distract us from the evils and injustices, the neuroses and psychoses, of our day. In fact, however, many artists—since before Schoenberg's time, I daresay—view art as an opportunity to *confront* their society with these things. Admittedly not an attitude befitting a lackey, but times have changed. The 20th century—a century plagued by war and genocide; by coercive, lying governments posing as democracies; by hunger and homelessness; by fascism and fanaticism (religious, political, *and* aesthetic)—is a terrifying time for many of us. Mr. Ribe says he doubts that works such as *Erwartung* or *Lulu* could have been written prior to the 20th century. On this point I concur. They were not needed until the 20th century.

JEFFERY COTTON
Department of Music
University of Pennsylvania
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

NEIL M. RIBE writes:

I thank Lisa Hanford Halasz and Seth Cropsey for their kind words. I am sorry to learn that the limits of atonality remain an unacceptable subject for discussion among professional musicians of Miss Halasz's acquaintance.

I thank Jeffery Cotton for taking my arguments seriously, even if he disagrees with most of them. He begins by noting that my definition of tonality, while not incorrect, is "excruciatingly incomplete." Of course it is: its only purpose is to introduce the subject matter of the article by pointing out that there was a musical system ("tonality") which Schoenberg felt compelled to reject. My subsequent argument in no way relies on this preliminary (but perfectly correct) definition, contrary to Mr. Cotton's claim.

Mr. Cotton's criticisms of my discussion of the octave show that he has completely failed to grasp the argument. The special status of the octave is an empirical fact: there is nothing "magical" or "supernal" about it (or indeed about my argument). Moreover, it is Mr. Cotton who "makes no attempt to defend" his view. I remind him that I explicitly noted two crucial facts which testify to the importance of the octave: its near-universal use as the foundation of the musical scale, and Schoenberg's acknowledgment of octave equivalence. A more ancient testimony to the same effect is the statement of Aristotle's student Aristoxenus that "the sum of an octave and any consonance is a consonance." The truth is that the evidence for the simplicity of the octave is overwhelming. Mr. Cotton, however, seems to prefer to ignore it. His gratuitous comparison of my views with those of someone he evidently despises (Heinrich Schenker) merely shows that he has no cogent response to the argument.

Mr. Cotton criticizes my citation of the pentatonic scale by noting that the twelve-note chromatic scale used by Bach and Schoenberg can also be obtained by ascending in fifths. This is correct, but misses my point, which I apologize for not explaining more clearly. The important point is that the further one ascends in the circle of fifths, the more complex is the intervalic content of the resulting scale. The intervals defined by pairs of notes in the pentatonic scale are primarily simple intervals low in the overtone series, with a high proportion of fifths and fourths. The chromatic scale, by contrast, contains a smaller proportion of such intervals and a greater proportion of complex intervals (such as the major seventh and the tritone). The limited intervalic content of the pentatonic scale is what accounts for the relatively simple and static quality of pentatonic music.

Mr. Cotton next criticizes me for not mentioning the fact that Renaissance music requires resolution of the fourth downward to the third. I did not do so for the simple reason that musical traditions generally become more complex over time: the earlier stages therefore reveal the simpler musical elements (i.e., fifths and fourths) more clearly. Nevertheless, the use of the third in Renaissance music is a revealing case which deserves further comment. The canonical interpretation of this development, shared by Mr. Cotton, is that the concepts of consonance and dissonance have changed over time. This is a superficial reading which obscures the more fundamental truth. To avoid misunderstanding, it is best to describe the qualities of intervals in terms of "complexity" or "color" rather than "dissonance" (as I no doubt should have done in my article). One can then see the evolution of Western music for what it is: the progressive discovery and exploitation of musical color. Medieval music made extensive use of relatively simple, "plain" intervals

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such as the fifth and the fourth. The great discovery of the Renaissance was that the possibilities of musical expression could be enormously increased by using a more complex and colorful interval (the third) at the expense of a simpler one (the fourth).

The transition from medieval to Renaissance music thus provides strong evidence that the intervals of the overtone series form a hierarchy of increasing complexity and color. The fact that the third came to be regarded as "consonant" (i.e., suitable for ending a piece) by no means implies that it is "simpler" than the fourth. The same is true of the final chords used in modern jazz, cited by Mr. Cotton. These chords are merely highly colored versions of the tonic triad, and thus embody precisely the same intervalic hierarchy as the rest of Western music.

I quite agree with Mr. Cotton that not all atonal music is dodecaphonic. I also agree that not all dodecaphonic music is uncompromisingly dissonant—that is, not if one builds tonal implications into the structure of the basic set in the first place (as Berg sometimes did). The important point is that the twelve-tone method as such is indifferent to tonal relations, and will only embody such relations if the composer deliberately introduces them.

I reject Mr. Cotton's false assertion that I ignore all but the vertical or harmonic aspects of music. I do not believe that the concepts of consonance and dissonance (or "color") are limited to the vertical dimension, and I therefore did not state or even imply such a view. Mr. Cotton evidently enjoys attributing other people's views to me, for he does it again a few lines later with his remarks on musical "accessibility."

Mr. Cotton begins to wax eloquent—or rather to rave—when he comes to the subject of musical expression in the 20th century. His last two paragraphs are a real collection of rhetorical gems, and I won't spoil the reader's fun with a detailed commentary. I merely pose a few questions for Mr. Cotton's consideration. Is our century the first to be plagued by "war and genocide," "coercive, lying governments," "hunger and homelessness," "fascism and fanaticism"? Were composers of previous centuries too naive to recognize the evils of their times? Why did they insist on creating works of beauty? What does this tell you about the 20th century? What does this tell you about your theory of art?

The Constitution

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Robert A. Goldwin, in his reply to my letter in the October 1987 issue commenting on his article, "Why Blacks, Women & Jews Are Not Mentioned in the Constitution" [May 1987], . . . thoroughly misunderstands the relationship between the equality of natural rights, proclaimed in the Declaration of Independence, and the civil or political rights secured by the Constitution of 1787. According to Mr. Goldwin:

> The rights, privileges, and protections the Constitution affords belong to each of us as person or citizen, without regard to sex, race, religion, national origin, or any group affiliation. The clear principle, although unmentioned in the Constitution itself, is that we are all equal in the politically relevant respect, that is, equal in our rights, the same equality that is proclaimed in the Declaration of Independence.

Abraham Lincoln, however, commenting on the meaning of the Declaration, in his speech on the *Dred Scott* decision, said that the enunciation of the principle of equal human rights

> did not mean to assert the obvious untruth, that all were then actually enjoying that equality, nor yet, that they [*viz.*, the signers of the Declaration] were about to confer it immediately upon them. In fact, they had no power to confer such a boon. They meant simply to declare the *right* so that the *enforcement* of it might follow as fast as circumstances should permit. [Emphasis in original]

Neither in 1776 nor in 1787 did the Founding Fathers establish—nor could they have established—in the state or federal constitutions, the equality of rights (of women, blacks, or Jews) proclaimed in the Declaration. Mr. Goldwin calls the constitutional status of slaves—as being simultaneously persons and chattels—"a carefully considered compromise, a deliberate acceptance of contradiction." But "a deliberate acceptance of contradiction" is something very different from "the same equality . . . proclaimed in the Declaration of Independence." Mr. Goldwin cannot have it both ways.

The status of slaves in the Constitution of 1787, which Mr. Goldwin concedes was self-contradictory, I had called schizophrenic. Mr. Goldwin angrily denounces me for employing "pop psychiatry." Schizophrenia is indeed a medical term, but it is also an ancient and honorable English word compounded of two Greek roots meaning split or divided mind. The word seemed appropriate to me, since this contradiction in the Constitution became the mark of the House Divided. Nothing in the Constitution told anyone which side of the contradiction was to prevail—the property rights of the slaveowner or the human rights of the slaves—when the two rights came into conflict in a federal territory, as they did in the case of Dred Scott. It was precisely this question which brought on the Civil War.

In that conflict many on the Confederate side admitted freely that the Framers were predominantly anti-slavery in their convictions. But, they also insisted, these anti-slavery opinions were set aside in reaching the compromises that produced the Constitution. Constitutional morality and the constitutional status of slavery, they said, were settled by the text of the Constitution alone. Madison's, or Jefferson's—or the Declaration's—moral condemnation of slavery remained moral judgments with no legal significance. This is precisely the view of Justice Rehnquist who in "The Notion of a Living Constitution" writes that

> The laws that emerge after a typical political struggle [e.g., the compromises on slavery in the 1787 Convention] in which various individual value judgments are debated . . . take on a form of moral goodness because they have been enacted into positive law. It is the fact of their enactment that gives them whatever moral claim they have on us as a society . . . and not any independent virtue they may have in any particular citizen's own scale of values.

Thus anti-slavery views had (or have) no more constitutional status than pro-slavery views, except insofar as they have been enacted into law. We have here another example of how, in Leo Strauss's words,

> a nation [the Confederate South] defeated on the battlefield, and, as it

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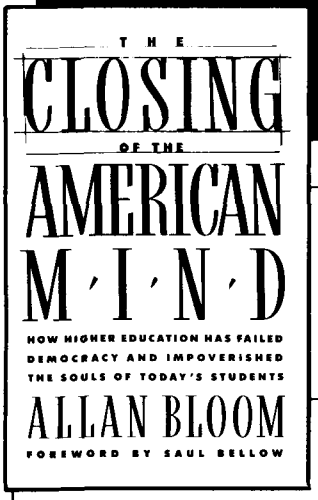

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> were, annihilated as a political being, has deprived its conquerors of the most sublime fruit of victory by imposing on them the yoke of its own thought. [*Natural Right and History*]

Judge Robert Bork, in a 1984 lecture (at the American Enterprise Institute) entitled "Tradition and Morality in Constitutional Law," expressed much the same view as Justice Rehnquist, when he declared that "our constitutional liberties arose out of historical experience. . . . *They do not rest upon any general theory.*" This most certainly—indeed explicitly—excludes the theory of natural rights and natural equality in the Declaration of Independence. For Rehnquist and Bork, historical fact creates historical right, which is the only ground of right they recognize. This is the inner meaning of their commitment to "original intent" jurisprudence. Their adversaries—Justice Brennan and his followers—agree in their premises. The latter conclude from it, however, that since history creates right they will make their own history rather than be governed by someone else's! That is how they understand self-government. In the face of this massive agreement between Left and Right in American jurisprudence, Mr. Goldwin's mere assertion without argument of the authority of the individual rights of the Declaration is meaningless. . . .

To repeat: Mr. Goldwin not only admits but insists that the "clear principle" of the Constitution (the doctrine of equal human rights in the Declaration) is "unmentioned in the Constitution itself." Yet he becomes angry when asked why this unmentioned principle (abandoned by his own admission in the "carefully considered compromise" on slavery) is in fact the clear principle. He suggests pompously that I "reread Aristotle on the difference between mathematics and politics, and the folly of demanding proof in political matters." In fact, I did not have to reread the passages in question (*Nicomachean Ethics*, 1094 b 23-28) because I knew them by heart. In them Aristotle distinguishes the *different kinds* of proof appropriate to the *different kinds* of subjects. We should not, he says, demand *mathematical* proofs of orators (that is, speakers on moral and political subjects), any more than we should accept probable (or rhetorical) arguments from mathematicians. He does not say we should not ask for *any* proofs *at all* from those who write or speak on political topics. After all, what is Aristotle's *Politics*?

I had written that the primacy of the rights asserted in the Declaration—why they had moral authority over constitution-makers—flowed from the fact that they belonged to "the laws of nature and of nature's God." Respect for the rights of others is not merely enlightened self-interest: it is part of our duty to the God who is the author of our being and therewith of our rights. Mr. Goldwin, like the legal positivists, tries to abstract "individual rights" from the conception of divine government from which their meaning is derived. He refuses to understand the Americans who framed and ratified the Constitution as they understood themselves.

In response to my question of whether he would defend the whole of which the doctrine of individual rights is a part, Mr. Goldwin writes . . . that I "commit several errors just in posing this question," the first of which is that " 'the laws of nature and of nature's God' . . . are not linked to individual rights at all, but to 'the separate and equal station' " . . . to which the American people as a whole are entitled.

We must ask *why* the American people are entitled to an equal station. The answer will be found in the assertion that, as individuals "created equal," they were authorized by the fact of that creation to form a society and a government. The equality of individual rights underlies the equality of collective rights of free peoples. Mr. Goldwin would divorce the first sentence of the Declaration from the logic of the principles enunciated immediately thereafter.

Next, Mr. Goldwin points out—presumably because I am ignorant of the fact—that "nature's God" is not the biblical God. Of course, "nature's God" is the God of natural—not revealed—theology. I never implied anything else. Yet the Declaration presupposes—as did Jefferson and Lincoln—that the purposes of natural and revealed theology are in harmony, and are mutually reinforcing, on the main points contended for by the Declaration. Mr. Goldwin's objections go to the root of all the theological convictions—whether natural or revealed—upon which the Founding doctrine of individual rights is based.

Mr. Goldwin writes that for Jefferson—unlike me—"individual rights and the Declaration's 'theology' are separable." His evidence is that in Jefferson's original draft (which he cites from Carl Becker's *The Declaration of Independence*) the theological phrases, "endowed by their Creator," "appealing to the Supreme Judge of the World," and "with a firm reliance upon the protection of divine Providence"—are absent. In reply to which I would observe, first of all, that it is the document adopted by the Congress, not Jefferson's draft, that *is* the Declaration of Independence. But is the doctrine of individual rights separate from theology in Jefferson's draft? Consider: "We hold these truths to be self-evident" was originally, "We hold these truths to be *sacred* and undeniable." "That all men are created equal and that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights" was originally "That all men are *created equal* and independent; *that from that equal creation they derive rights inherent and inalienable . . .*" (emphasis added). The alleged separation of the doctrine of individual rights from theology in Jefferson's draft is simply not there.

But let us go beyond the Declaration (and the draft of the Declaration) for evidence of the indissolubility, in Jefferson's mind, of the Declaration's teaching concerning individual rights, and its theology. Of the three things Jefferson caused to be inscribed upon his tombstone, those things by which he wished most to be remembered, the first was the Declaration of Independence. Second—and central—was the Virginia Statute of Religious Freedom. The doctrine of the individual's right to religious liberty holds

> that our civil rights have no dependence on our religious opinions, any more than our opinions in physics or geometry.

The ground of this tenet, the premise of the argument in its favor, is that

> Almighty God hath created the mind free.

As a witness of the truth of that doctrine, Jefferson asserts that any attempt to influence anyone's re-

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ligious opinions by temporal rewards or punishments is

> a departure from the plan of the Holy author of our religion, who being Lord both of body and mind, yet chose not to propagate it by coercions on either, as was in his Almighty power to do, but to exalt it by its influence upon reason alone.

The words that I have quoted are identical in Jefferson's draft and in the statute, except for the words following the last comma, which were deleted by the Virginia legislature. The argument for religious liberty, however, as set forth by Jefferson in the Virginia Statute of Religious Liberty (and in its predecessor, Madison's *Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments*) is at every point founded upon religious premises. There is no textual evidence for supposing that either Jefferson or Madison regarded that argument to be tenable without those premises.

In the *Notes on Virginia*, written during the Revolution, Jefferson, reflecting upon the terrible contradiction of American freedom and American slavery, asked:

> And can the liberties of a nation be thought secure when we have removed *their only firm basis*, a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are of the gift of God? That they are not to be violated but with his wrath? [Emphasis added]

Mr. Goldwin may think that "in the minds of the people" indicates that Jefferson regarded this "conviction" merely as a salutary myth. But consider the sequel:

> Indeed, I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just; that his justice cannot sleep forever; that considering numbers, nature and natural means only, a revolution of the wheel of fortune, an exchange of situation is among possible events; that it may become probable by supernatural interference! The Almighty has no attribute which can take side with us in such a contest. [Query XVIII]

The "conviction in the minds of the people" is here set forth as Jefferson's own. Both the natural and supernatural order (reason and revelation) agree in regarding despotism as an abomination. Jefferson's forecast of a civil and servile war is certainly among the most remarkable prophecies upon the human record. "I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just" was probably quoted more often by Lincoln than any Jeffersonian maxim except the great proposition of the Declaration.

When asked whether he would defend the theology of the Declaration—which is nothing less than to defend its argument— . . . Mr. Goldwin replies: ". . . nowhere in the Hebrew Bible or the New Testament is there any mention of rights." . . . The assertion that there is no "mention of rights" in the Bible tells us that Mr. Goldwin believes, as Walter Berns has written, that "the very idea of natural rights is incompatible with Christian doctrine and, by its formulators, was understood to be incompatible."

The only evidence Berns has ever presented for this remarkable thesis is drawn from Spinoza, Hobbes, and Locke. He simply assumes, without argument or evidence, that all the Founding Fathers, notwithstanding whatever it was they actually said, were all secret disciples of these allegedly atheist philosophers. Every expression of conventional (or unconventional) piety by, e.g., Jefferson or Washington, is greeted with knowing winks and nods, indicating how well these men had covered up the tracks of their infidelity—to the vulgar, that is, but not to the cognoscenti. This is esotericism run riot. . . . The esoteric atheism of the Founding Fathers has become an article of faith among a certain school or sect to which, as it appears, Mr. Goldwin belongs. This sect displays all the ire of theological fanaticism when anyone questions them about it.

That there is no natural-rights doctrine in the Bible in any formal or literal sense is certainly true. In the Declaration of Independence, the equality of all men by nature is the ground of the condemnation of despotism, and by the same reason, the ground of legitimate government. Abraham Lincoln, however, surely the greatest interpreter of the Declaration, throughout his life found equal ground in the Bible for the truth of the Declara-

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tion's condemnation of slavery. In the greatest of his speeches—perhaps the greatest political speech ever given—Lincoln meditated on the fact that both those who fought for slavery, and those who fought against slavery, read the same Bible and prayed to the same God. To this he responded, "It may seem strange that any men should dare to ask a just God's assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces. . . ."

Lincoln went on to see the Civil War as a divine punishment for the sin of slavery, affirming that what Jefferson had prophesied in the *Notes on Virginia* had come to pass. He saw the war moreover in the light of Exodus, and of the punishment visited upon Pharaoh and Pharaoh's minions, for holding in bondage the Children of Israel. The coming together of the teaching of the Bible and of the Declaration is moreover nowhere more perfect than in the great Negro spirituals which, like the Old Testament, were born of the experience of slavery:

> Go down Moses,
> Go down to Egypt land,
> And tell ol' Pharaoh,
> To let my people go.

HARRY V. JAFFA
Claremont, California

ROBERT A. GOLDWIN writes:

Harry V. Jaffa attributes to me naiveté, anger, pomposity, fanaticism (and somewhat more), but since my wife, children, grandchildren, other relatives, colleagues, and several old friends assure me that these are "mere assertions" on his part, with no persuasive proof, either geometrical or rhetorical, I will ignore rather than deny them.

I will also ignore his tedious repetitions of warmed-over arguments from his old articles and lectures that are irrelevant to my article or that were sufficiently refuted in my response to his previous letter.

I will reply, however, to what he has to say about some other matters—schizophrenia and contradiction, rights, and religion.

Mr. Jaffa returns in this letter to a problem he can't let go of. He insists on denouncing the authors of our Constitution as schizophrenic concerning slavery, whereas I look at the same proceedings in the Constitutional Convention and the same provisions in the text of the Constitution and descry a deliberate, thoroughly debated, carefully considered, intentional contradiction. Mr. Jaffa is unwilling or unable to accept the possibility that they contradicted themselves consciously, rationally, prudently, and —most important—that they did so for the sake of the advancement of the cause of liberty and equality.

But how far will this eminent scholar stoop to avoid losing a dispute? He is one of America's most learned men. He knows passages of Aristotle by heart (in Greek, no doubt). He mistakenly thinks that when I point out something to him (for instance, that "nature's God" is not the biblical God) it is because I presume he is "ignorant of the fact," but the truth is I never presume his ignorance on any matter. When he makes a bad argument, or presents evidence that is not factual, or gives a twisted account of an adversary's thesis, the least likely explanation, in my opinion, is that it was done out of ignorance or incompetence. And so, when he gives a false history of an English word, as he has done in the case of "schizophrenia," I definitely do not presume that he didn't know the true history or, at the very least, how to look it up.

Mr. Jaffa complains because I denounced him "angrily"—I wasn't angry, I was amused—for employing "pop psychiatry" in calling the Framers schizophrenic. He pleads not guilty to practicing amateur psychiatry, and hopes to be exonerated on the basis of his testimony to the court of COMMENTARY readers that "schizophrenia" is "an ancient and honorable English word," not just a medical term. "Schizophrenia" is not an ancient word. "Schizophrenia" is strictly a 20th-century medical term, invented by Professor Eugen Bleuler as an alternative for "dementia praecox" (Henry Alan Skinner, *The Origin of Medical Terms*). The word is not to be found in the *Oxford English Dictionary* but it does appear in *A Supplement to the Oxford English Dictionary*, published in 1982. The first English use of "schizophrenia" was in a volume published in 1912, a translation of articles by Professor Bleuler published in 1910 and 1911.

In this authoritative dictionary, and in all others I have consulted, the only definitions given are medical. Schizophrenia is "a mental disorder," plain and simple, "characterized by a breakdown in the relation between thoughts, feelings, and actions, usually with withdrawal from social activity and the occurrence of delusions and hallucinations."

Schizophrenics harbor "a number of unrelated fantasies and identifications simultaneously." Schizophrenics pass most of their time "in a shadowy world of phantoms and unrealities" (Aldous Huxley), "living quite happily amid dreams of power and conquest which have no connection with the physical world" (George Orwell). No dictionary I have seen connects "schizophrenia" in any way to "compromise" or "contradiction."

There are popular usages and misusages of the word, not at all scientific, but they make sense only when obviously related to the psychological meaning of the word, a mental disorder, as in this example in the *OED Supplement*:

> He was schizophrenic long before the thing became fashionable, half of him being entirely rational, the other half living in a world in which it was taken for granted that pigs have wings.

When I consider the true meaning of the word and Mr. Jaffa's use of it to describe the Framers, and his subsequent defense of it ("the word seemed appropriate to me") even after having it brought to his attention in print, I conclude that in all of the commentaries on the authors of the Constitution of the United States of America over the last two hundred years, Mr. Jaffa's description of them and their work as schizophrenic is surely the most bizarre, unwarranted, trivializing, and contemptible that ever dripped from a malicious pen.

This inability to distinguish schizophrenia and carefully considered contradiction is a fundamental disability in one who pretends to be a teacher of politics. It may not interfere with analysis or interpretation of words on paper—Aristotle's *Politics*, or the Declaration of Independence, or the Gettysburg Address—but it renders him worse than worthless as a guide to understanding the Constitution and the work of the delegates who wrote it, because prudential compromises and unavoidable contradictions were demanded of great political men striving to embody in the offices and institutions of government, for the first time, the universal principles of the primacy and equality of the rights of all human beings, among a people devoted to

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liberty who had practiced slavery for more than a century. One cannot understand such a situation unless one is able to appreciate the possibility of conscious contradiction for a good cause as the action of a healthy, not a diseased, political mind.

For example, he says that "the doctrine of equal human rights in the Declaration" was "abandoned" in the contradictory compromise on slavery. But, of course, that misses the point entirely. If the principle had been abandoned, there would be no contradiction. The compromise—adhering to the principle that all men are equal in their rights and yet permitting slavery to persist, at least for a time, for the sake of union—was a contradiction precisely because the Framers, as principled as they were practical, did *not* abandon the principle of equal rights.

Abraham Lincoln's point (as quoted by Mr. Jaffa) is clear enough, but not at all what Mr. Jaffa says it is. Lincoln's point is that it is one thing to declare all human beings equal in their rights (as is done explicitly in the Declaration and implicitly in the Constitution), and it is quite another thing to secure the full and equal enjoyment of those rights. The Declaration established no institutions and had no enforcement provisions; as powerful a force in the cause of freedom and equality as it has been down through history and around the world, it did not and could not by itself secure the enjoyment of rights. For that task, the Constitution was needed.

Lincoln points to a simple and important distinction, the difference between having a right and actually enjoying it. We are equal in our rights because whatever other distinctions there are among us, no one is more a human being than another. We are equal in our rights because we are equal in our humanity. Everyone knows that the enjoyment of these rights is unequal. That is why matters of rights are before the courts all the time. We have rights equally but they are not enjoyed equally. Because we *know* that we are equal in our rights we ask the courts to give us what we are entitled to. If we were not equal in our rights by nature, we would not be justified in insisting on equal treatment when treated unequally. That is what I argued, that is what I understand Lincoln to be arguing, and I don't understand why it should give Mr. Jaffa the slightest difficulty.

The Constitution established a government dedicated to the effort to secure the enjoyment of rights. In my view, there was no lack of adherence by the Framers to the principles of the Declaration. But the Constitutional Convention was not a graduate seminar in political philosophy, but rather a gathering of principled political men undertaking an unprecedented effort at founding a new kind of political society out of the preexisting materials of a very imperfect society, already 170 years old, a society profoundly corrupted by the institution of human slavery. In such a situation, purity and perfection could be hoped for only by one who lived "in a world in which it was taken for granted that pigs have wings."

Mr. Jaffa stakes everything on his assertion that a certain "theology" is inseparable from the doctrine of natural rights as found in the Declaration of Independence and in the thought of Thomas Jefferson. But back in the days when Mr. Jaffa knew something about the difference between ancient and modern political thought, and the distinction between classical natural right and modern natural rights, and taught them as well as anyone of his generation, he knew better. In his authoritative article on "Natural Rights" in the *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* (1968), he explained that the origin of all natural rights is the not-very-lofty right to self-preservation, and he did it without any reference to religion, theology, revelation, or divinity:

> . . . there are many natural rights, but all of them are inferences from one original right, the right that each man has to preserve his life. All other natural rights, like the right to liberty and the right to property, are necessary inferences from the right of self-preservation. The doctrine of natural rights teaches primarily, then, that all obligation is derived from the right which every man has to preserve his own life.

And what did he say about religion, or "theology"? Practically nothing. There isn't the slightest hint that individual rights and "theology" are inseparable. Mr. Jaffa didn't consider it necessary to argue that religion is related or unrelated to rights. In his long *Encyclopedia* article (even longer than his present letter), the *only* mentions of religion are confined to just one brief paragraph, which I quote in full:

> Nothing better indicates the difference between the earlier and later doctrines than their attitudes toward religion. From the point of view of classical natural right, religion is one of the most important means by which men are directed toward virtue, and hence toward temporal no less than toward eternal felicity. Accordingly, religious institutions are among the most important political institutions. The point of view of the adherent of the modern natural rights school, on the other hand, was perfectly expressed by Jefferson when he wrote, "The legitimate powers of government extend to such acts only as are injurious to others. But it does me no injury for my neighbor to say there are twenty gods, or no god. It neither picks my pocket nor breaks my leg."

And that, as I say, was all that Mr. Jaffa of 1968 had to say about the connection of religion and natural rights.

It strikes me as eccentric, to say the least, to conclude, as Mr. Jaffa does, by preaching a sermon and singing a song. It seemed to me, instead, both fitting and fair to conclude my response (and also to conclude this exchange) by giving to Mr. Jaffa the last, albeit self-contradictory, word.

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American Jews and Israel

A Symposium

Never, perhaps, has criticism of the state of Israel by American Jews been so open, so widespread, and so bitter as it is today.

Some of this criticism clearly represents a return of the various traditions of opposition to Zionism that in the pre-state period enjoyed such a lively existence. With the founding of the state forty years ago, these traditions went into temporary eclipse, but lately, and especially since the Lebanon war, they have come back again, couched in updated forms and espoused by people who may or may not be aware of their provenance. They include the old (Orthodox) charge that a secular state in the Holy Land runs counter to Jewish religious teachings; the old (Reform/humanist) idea that statehood represents a betrayal of the supposedly universalist mission of the Jews; the old (socialist) notion that Zionism is a regressive expression of bourgeois nationalism; even the old (assimilationist) claim that by raising the specter of dual loyalty a Jewish state compromises or actually endangers the position of Jewish communities in the Diaspora.

In addition to all this, there has been a marked change even among American Jews whose commitment to Israel has long been unambiguous and steady. Not only have such Jews become increasingly willing to criticize Israel's policies and even Israel itself, they have also been more and more disposed to do so in public. Conversely, it is hard to remember a time when favorable comment about Israel has been so muted and so scanty within the American Jewish community.

This, then, is the paradoxical situation as Israel approaches its fortieth birthday. In trying to determine what justification, if any, there may be for such a state of affairs, COMMENTARY *addressed the following questions to a diverse group of American Jewish intellectuals:*

1. Have your own attitudes toward Israel changed in recent years? Why? Why not?

2. To what extent do you believe Israel has fulfilled, or disappointed, the hopes vested in it?

3. How do you feel about the upsurge of Jewish criticism of Israel? Is it healthy? Is it dangerous? What does it portend?

The responses—forty-nine in all—follow in alphabetical order.

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Lionel Abel: Among the supporters of Israel I am a Jonathan-come-lately, for I held back from actively or even explicitly supporting the new state during the 50's and early 60's. My attitude then I would describe as one of tolerant acquiescence in Israel's existence, but this did not change to unequivocal backing until the 70's when I finally became aware of how bankrupt were my previously held Marxist-socialist views. I vividly recall the remark of a close friend during the late 40's—in 1947, I believe—about an interesting piece of Harold Rosenberg's in COMMENTARY ["Pledged to the Marvelous," February 1947], which argued for the support of Israel in irrationalist terms heavily dependent on Kierkegaardian subtleties. It was an odd piece, and may have prompted the gibe of the French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, "There are certain Jews who would have quit the Jewish fold had it not been for Sören Kierkegaard." My friend, who had undergone the same Trotskyist influences I had, said to me: "I can't think of anything worse intellectually than for Harold, who has been an internationalist, to come out for Israel, a nation-state."

But there is a problem in supporting Israel today, even if one is not conflicted in having to hold both nationalist and internationalist principles. The problem is raised by Israel's political behavior, most recently its invasion of Lebanon, which called down on it the wrath of Jacobo Timerman, Arthur Hertzberg, and the editors of the *London Review of Books*. Israel's rule over the West Bank has already alienated the British intelligentsia and now threatens to alienate the Jewish intellectuals in America, even those in New York.

What if the Israelis relinquish the West Bank? My hope is that they will finally adopt such a policy. But the fact is that they are still governing the West Bank's Palestinians, many of whom support the PLO. What is proper for someone who is judging Israel from New York City to say about all this?

There is an event in Trotsky's struggle with Stalin which I find pertinent here, possibly instructive. Outmaneuvered by Stalin and about to be exiled, Trotsky, at a party meeting, took this stand: "There are bourgeois politicians who say, 'My country, right or wrong.' I say, 'Even when it is wrong, I support my party.'" Hearing this, Stalin knew he had triumphed, and commented sagely: "Comrade Trotsky is in error. At times it is wrong to support the party, as Comrade Lenin made clear. He was never afraid to break with the party when it was in error." So there was Trotsky, whom I shall for the moment call Trotsky-Stalin, setting the party above any criticism of it, and there was Stalin, whom I shall refer to—but just this once—as Stalin-Trotsky, setting political criticism above the party. In this reversal of roles, Trotsky was at his weakest, Stalin at his most brilliant.

The incident touches on a dilemma which it might be useful to explore. What value could take precedence over the fortunes of one's country or, for that matter, of a political party to which one has sworn loyalty? One may of course criticize one's country if no risk to it follows from one's criticism, and the same might be said about criticizing a favored political party. However, it should be clear that if a country could *never* be endangered by some criticism of it, no one would ever have said, "My country, right or wrong." The meaning I take that statement to have is this: "I shall not set a moral principle (perhaps a prejudice) above the interest of my country, should it be threatened."

But Israel has always been under threat, and the threat has taken the form precisely of moralizing. A moral consensus after World War II brought Israel into existence; it could well be destroyed by the moral consensus now being prepared against it. I do not believe the assertion of Arthur Hertzberg that in 1967 Israel was ready to take on the whole world, and I am very much afraid that reckless assertions of this sort may lead to the whole world taking on Israel.

So I come to this question: is it wrong to put the good of one's country *above* a moral opinion? I use the word "opinion" here advisedly, for those who today assert that moral judgment may be set above the interest of one's country do not also insist that such moral judgments have to be strictly true. They are, I assume, sophisticated enough to know how difficult it is to say of any moral assertion that it is more than an opinion, that it is strictly true.

We have been told by the excellent Italian philosopher Gianni Vattimo that, in the twilight of metaphysics we live in, the ideas we cultivate ought to be weak. How in the moral order can we differentiate weak from strong ideas?

A strong moral idea would be (1) universal, and (2) independent of whatever followed from holding it. Kant thought his moral principles universally valid and independent of consequences. He held that property rights were sacred, and condemned the sailors who helped themselves to some figs carried by the ship they were on when the crew's food had been consumed. Pressed as to whether the sailors should have died of hunger rather than consume figs belonging to others, Kant replied without hesitation in the affirmative. Which tells us something about the character of *strong* moral ideas: they hold universally, and are not invalidated by what might follow from adhering to them. In the case of the sailors, this would have meant death by starvation.

That the moral judgments made against Israel are of the weak variety may be seen in the fact that they are stated as opinions rather than as truths, and are never said to be valid without regard to consequences. In fact they are stated in a manner which suggests that there will be bad

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consequences for Israel should it not heed them. But can what is presented as *of value* to Israel really be more valuable than Israel? Or, more generally, can weak moral ideas be more important than one's country?

I am for Israel, which has given me the automatic right to become a citizen of it, and I put its existence above all the weak moral judgments others make of it. I would like Israel's leaders to accommodate my moral feelings and do certain things. For example, I would like them to get out of the West Bank. But if they choose not to do so, I still choose to support Israel. Moreover, whatever they do, I too am doing. For I do not want to claim innocence in New York for what may be wrongly wrought in Jerusalem.

LIONEL ABEL *is professor emeritus of English literature at SUNY-Buffalo. His latest collection of essays is* Important Nonsense (*Prometheus Press*).

Edward Alexander: I believe now, as I did twenty years ago, that Israel represents the best, perhaps the only, hope for Jewish collective survival, and that its security and well-being constitute an end for which American Jews should be ready to suppress their baser impulses—self-righteousness, self-indulgence, self-love—in favor of self-discipline. I believe now, as I did in 1967, that Israel is a country under siege, beleaguered by enemies eager to reduce it to sandy wastes. I am unimpressed by the arguments, crystallized in the American-made slogan "Peace Now," that Israel's policies or its presence in Judea and Samaria are the sole impediments to peace in the Middle East. The Arabs, on June 4, 1967, had been in possession of these territories for nineteen years, during which time they showed no interest either in establishing another Palestinian Arab state or in making peace.

ISRAEL has fulfilled many aspirations of the Zionist ideal but, so far, failed to realize others. How could it be otherwise? "Is a land born in one day? / Is a nation brought forth at once?" Enormous numbers of Jews fleeing persecution have been welcomed in Israel. Sephardi Jews, despite many difficulties (caused largely by Israel's European socialism whose demise is now daily lamented by its American Jewish critics), have now been integrated into most areas of Israeli life, especially local government. That valley of dry bones called Soviet Jewry was raised to new life by the very existence of Israel, which then willingly received the best fruits of this renaissance. While the anti-Zionists of the world were castigating "Zionist racism," the real Israel was rescuing and welcoming 12,000 black Jews from Ethiopia. Some months ago, while walking toward the Bikur Cholim Hospital in central Jerusalem, I was stunned by the sight of close to a hundred Ethiopian Jewish girls resplendent in the blue and white uniforms of nursing trainees out on their lunch break. "Yes," I said to myself, "in spite of blackcoats, turncoats, Kahane, Aloni, Benvenisti, and even the Haifa Municipal Theater, this is a remarkable country, a great country."

Among the practicing Zionists of Israel, as among the professing Zionists of America, there are, to be sure, many imperfections, imperfections that the Israelis cannot, like their American cousins, blame on the surrounding Gentile culture: power inevitably taints. The narrow, often religiously illiterate, culture of socialist Zionism produced a system of education that has worked to detach Jews from their Jewish roots and weaken the bonds that most profoundly attach people to life. Despite this, Israel has instilled in the majority of its citizens a national character without which the sacrifices Israelis make cannot be fathomed. I am filled with admiration for a colleague at Tel Aviv University who stays up through the night to mark Shakespeare papers because he must leave early in the morning to do three weeks of reserve duty with what he facetiously calls "our gallant boys in green." I think always about the courage, the absence of self-pity, the resilience of close friends who, after their sons have fallen in Israel's wars, continue to do their duty in life, often a very arduous duty. I think especially of an old friend who, within a day of his own son's death in combat, was treating wounded soldiers flown by helicopter to the Rambam Hospital. And *these* are the people who make up what one of the most aggressive American Jewish critics of Israel—Jacob Neusner—calls "a Jewish society in which no one gives a damn for anyone else"!

ALTHOUGH American Jewish groups that specialize in negative criticism of Israel seem to have persuaded their sycophants (see the *Wall Street Journal*, July 6, 1987) that they came into existence during the Lebanese invasion, the truth is less flattering to their sense of heroic daring and tender conscience. American Friends of Peace Now, for example, first unfurled its banner, as Ruth R. Wisse pointed out in these pages ["'Peace Now' & American Jews," August 1980], in June 1980 in the immediate aftermath of a more than usually foul barrage of anti-Israel invective from the PLO and its European stooges. There is nothing "healthy" in such cravenness or in hallucinating moderation in a murderous enemy when you are not the one who will have to face his attack. Peace Now and the hissing Israel-haters of New Jewish Agenda do not respect the sovereignty of democratically elected Israeli governments, whose decisions they can condemn with impunity because where once the earth opened up to swallow the sons of Korah, the boards of Jewish federations

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now open to welcome them. On the question of whether withdrawal of American Jewish moral and political support from Israel is as dangerous to Israel as it is safe for its critics, I prefer to save my breath to cool my porridge.

YES, the old fear of accusations of dual loyalty is at work among Jews, and could be seen in the more pusillanimous responses to Gore Vidal's anti-Semitic ejaculations of 1986. Arthur Hertzberg expressed his "delight" that Vidal had said (actually, he hadn't) "complimentary things about Peace Now." Saul Bellow bewailed "the price we have been paying for our solid support of Israel over 40 years" and warned that the Pollard affair might retroactively confirm Vidal's accusations of dual loyalty.

But there is also a real duality that troubles many American Jewish intellectuals. They find themselves uncomfortably situated between recognition that the flourishing of Jewish life here has been dependent upon Jewish rebirth in Zion, and resentment of the faulty, un-American behavior of the people who actually live (and, alas, also vote) in Zion. They need Zion, but wish it weren't in Israel. The lowbrow, leftist version of this need to define oneself in opposition to Israel is found in an Arthur Waskow or a Balfour Brickner, whose contribution to theology is the doctrine that Sandinista Nicaragua is the true Israel, the middlebrow version in Neusner, who tells *National Review* readers that the very idea of Jewish unity, of the *people* Israel, is an Israeli concoction, "an ideology of blood." For this prophet of Jewish disunity, America is "the Promised Land for Jews," and he cannot abide the fact that millions of American Jews still find in Israel a lodging for the organized memory of Jewish national feeling.

But we must not raise questions about the inalienable right of such American Jews to criticize Israel in public, for they are sensitive plants liable to shrivel at the first question as if it were exhaled by a basilisk. Thus Neusner, after publishing his famous broadside against Israel in the Washington *Post* and 450 other papers, followed with a plaintive piece claiming that he had been "martyred" by the very American Jewish community he had courageously championed against Israel, made a victim of "murder by silence." "They won't print you, they won't let you speak, they won't review your books, they won't argue with you." What parades itself as high idealism turns out to be self-love, not a promising foundation for a new, American Jerusalem, but lethal enough to damage the old, original one.

EDWARD ALEXANDER, *whose most recent book is* The Jewish Idea and Its Enemies, *is professor of English at Tel Aviv University and the University of Washington.*

Robert Alter: The most fundamental fact about the state of Israel is that it constitutes a radical turning point in Jewish history. We have not had such an opportunity as a people in 2,000 years—and, indeed, the last instance of national independence, under the Hasmoneans, represented less real autonomy and exhibited far less political decency than Israel does today. We are not likely to have such an opportunity again, and so I find it hard to imagine how one can choose to be a Jew at this point in time without a staunch commitment to the urgency of Israel's survival. I have felt this way ever since I began to think about such questions, and nothing that has occurred in recent years has altered this conviction, including policies and actions of the Israeli government that I view as misguided or self-defeating.

Israel, whatever its imperfections, has certainly fulfilled the hopes vested in it. The most essential of these are the establishment of political autonomy, so that Jews need no longer be passive victims in the historical realm, and the creation through that autonomy of a new secular Jewish culture in the Hebrew language. These are, it seems to me, the reasonable hopes to have been vested in Israel. But the moment one's hopes for the Jewish state are pitched in a messianic key—something that has been done not only by the occasional unreconstructed messianist but more conspicuously by many people who are "attracted" to the messianic idea though they stand at a great distance from both Zionism and the Jewish people—then of course the state of Israel must be a bitter disappointment.

Mismanagement, obtuseness, cynicism, and corruption are variously perceptible in all governments of which I am aware, past and present, and so all governments are vulnerable to criticism. This does not mean, however, that one cannot make sharp qualitative distinctions between, say, Pol Pot's Cambodia and Margaret Thatcher's England, or more specifically to our point, between Syria's massacre of over 20,000 of its own citizens at Hama and Israel's intermittent violation of the civil rights of Arabs on the West Bank. I do not believe in moratoriums on criticism of Israel, and I have from time to time publicly expressed such criticism myself, including in the pages of this magazine. But a great deal depends on the tone of the criticism, the assumptions on which it is predicated, and the contexts in which it is pronounced.

Saul Bellow makes the tart observation in *To Jerusalem and Back* that what the Alps are to skiers, Israel has become to the moral critics of the world. In part, he means simply that Israel is judged by a more exacting standard. What is more ominous—and I suspect Bellow also has this in mind—is that the criticism of Israel often has a querulous undertone, implying if not actually stating that unless the Israelis can demonstrate

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unfalteringly that their behavior is beyond moral reproach, the state is a "tragic error," and has no right to exist.

As Americans, we may view the continuing spectacle of deception, blundering, and borderline criminality in our own government with varying degrees of unease, distress, or anger, but nobody outside the bomber Left construes any of this as calling into question the legitimacy of our national existence. I cannot see why the case should be different for Israel, a country which, like America, exercises various democratic checks on the abuse or inept exercise of power.

IN REGARD TO the context for criticizing Israel in this country, let me offer one experience as a kind of illustrative parable. When the Israelis invaded Lebanon in 1982, I had some misgivings from the start about the wisdom of the action—misgivings that became much more pronounced during the year following the incursion, which I spent with my family in Jerusalem. Nobody asked me for my opinion, and when the widespread vilification of Israel in the American press became evident, I would in any case have said nothing that might seem to amplify that chorus of hostility.

On the second day of the war, there was, predictably, an anti-Israel demonstration in Berkeley's Sproul Plaza, birthplace of the student revolution of the 60's. Among the placard-bearers I noticed three Israeli graduate students, including one who had taken a number of courses with me. Knowing the vehemence of their political position, I thought remonstration then and there would have been futile, but I would have liked to tell them the following: a protest against Israeli actions in Sproul Plaza means something rather different from a protest on Ben-Yehuda Street in Jerusalem. In this particular American context, whatever the seriousness of the protesters' objections to the policy at stake, protest becomes a way of saying, *We* are not that kind of Israeli, not that kind of Jew. And to display slogans like "Israel Out of Lebanon" in the same marching circle with people actively disseminating every distorted propaganda release from the PLO as hard fact, people who are known by past actions to be ideologically committed to the destruction of Israel, is to convey to onlookers another message, "Israel Out of the Middle East."

All this involves a painful dilemma because it is surely unhealthy to renounce the prerogative of criticism, and I would even argue that there is a kind of immorality in American Jews' giving any Israeli government an automatic blank check when they care deeply about the future of the Jewish state and see things that seriously disturb them. But remembering Sproul Plaza in 1982, I think considerable vigilance must be exercised to ensure that the time, place, and manner of the criticism do not conspire to make it an instrument that can be turned against Israel's most vital interests.

ROBERT ALTER *is professor of Hebrew and comparative literature at the University of California at Berkeley and co-editor, with Frank Kermode, of the recently published* The Literary Guide to the Bible *(Harvard University Press).*

Jerold S. Auerbach: Even the idea of a Jewish state, to say nothing of the reality of Israel, seldom inspired feelings of passionate attachment in the majority of American Jews. There were some conspicuously exceptional moments of identification; but between Herzl and the Holocaust, as from the Independence war to the Lebanon war, the characteristic American Jewish response was indifference, yielding to evident fear and trembling whenever Jews felt that their loyalty to the United States was threatened. The recent outpouring of criticism surely is unprecedented, but after nearly a century of American Jewish detachment from the Jewish national revival it is not entirely surprising. Now as always, the most vocal American critics, captivated by the siren song of secular liberalism, remain tone-deaf to the resounding national and religious themes of Jewish history.

I recognize the symptoms because I once suffered from the disability. I can recall, vividly if painfully, my own eagerness to superimpose American categories on Israel, and my impatience with such varied forms of Jewish intractability as resistance to Arab terror and Sabbath observance. But living in Israel for two years, I came to appreciate the legitimate imperatives of Jewish history, quite apart from the prevailing fashions on the East Bank of the Hudson. I learned that Yasir Arafat is not George Washington; the hostility between Arabs and Jews is not an instant replay of the American civil-rights struggle; Lebanon is not Vietnam; Isaiah and Jeremiah were not the co-founders of Americans for Democratic Action; and the Torah still says to Jews something even more profound than the First Amendment about their lives, their homeland, and their identity as a people.

Zionism, after all, is not merely the modern Jewish expression of Western liberalism, sprinkled with obligatory references to prophetic justice. It taps the oldest, deepest yearnings of Jews to live in the land that God promised to them. (Even David Ben-Gurion knew that "the Bible is our mandate.") Judaism and Zionism are too complex, even idiosyncratic, to fit any narrow mold of "enlightened" secularism. As a Jewish state, not the 51st American state, Israel must take seriously the covenantal relationship, originating in divine command, that has bound a people to its

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land ever since the Exodus. This is a difficult concept for many Jews (even in Israel) to absorb, but if it cannot find expression in a Jewish state, where will it be respected?

THE liberal fantasies of American Jews about Israel were demolished by Menachem Begin. They had idolized Ben-Gurion, embraced Golda Meir, and appreciated the eagerness of Labor leaders (Shimon Peres especially) to submit to American pressure. But Begin, the irascible *shtetl* Jew, expressed memories, gestures, and priorities that made secular liberal Jews uneasy (a prime minister who wore a *kippah* and prayed at the Western Wall?). His strident commitment to *Eretz Israel* was alarming (a Jew who took seriously the divine covenant with the patriarchs?). American Jews ignored the singular achievements of the first prime minister of Israel to make peace with an Arab state; to legitimate the two-party system; to extend political recognition to the Sephardi underclass; to reinvigorate the venerable Zionist principle of settling the land of Israel; and to inflict a military defeat upon the PLO from which it has yet to recover. Once Begin grafted traditional Jewish symbols to the civil religion of Israel, he confronted American Jews with the wicked dilemma that elicited their unrestrained denunciation: would they ride the turbulent currents of Jewish history and destiny as members of the Jewish people or would they, as American outsiders, retreat to the safety of their protected sanctuary?

It is evident that Israel disappointed the hopes of its liberal partisans, who still yearn for the good old days of *halutzim* in short pants draining swamps by day and dancing the hora at night; repulsing the Arab Goliath with their slingshots while consigning religion to the dustbin of Diaspora history. American Jews tolerated Israel as long as it was vulnerable, responsive to external pressure, and insufficiently Jewish to cause embarrassment. The more independent, and distinctively Jewish, that Israel has become since 1977, the more it has antagonized American Jews. The pre-state critique of Jewish nationalism has yielded to an even more impassioned denunciation of religious Judaism, strengthened by evident discomfort with the determination of Israel to settle and defend the borders of its homeland.

Criticism of Israel is an admission ticket to some respectable Western liberal salons. It also expresses the self-interest of American Jews, who are protected by six thousand miles from any consequences of their op-ed columns. Unless they can bring themselves to voice such criticism from homes in Kiryat Shemona or Kiryat Arba, it is an irresponsible indulgence. It may enhance their comfort as Americans, but it surely heightens the vulnerability of Jews in Israel. Anyone who welcomes a Jewish state that expresses the intricate texture of the Jewish historical experience, rather than the constricted modern liberal rendition of it, should be heartened by the exuberant creativity of Israel as it struggles to reconnect itself to some of the innermost and abiding sources of Judaism. For even as Tel Aviv, the city built on sand, has become a cultural suburb of Los Angeles, we are reminded (by Isaiah) that the word of God will come from Jerusalem, the holy city.

The flight of American Jews from Israel (especially in academic and journalistic circles) is a spiritual emigration of alarming proportions. It is lamentable that American Jews, internalizing the indictments of the most hostile enemies of Israel, should so distance themselves from their own people (even in the caring guise of "protecting" Israelis from their folly). It recalls that sorrowful episode, in 70 C.E., when some Jews fought against the Roman invaders while other Jews fought among themselves—until nothing was left to fight about, except Masada. The Temple was not destroyed by the legions of Titus, the rabbis remind us, but by *sinat hinam*, "groundless hatred" among Jews.

JEROLD S. AUERBACH, *professor of history at Wellesley College, is writing a book about American law and Jewish acculturation.*

Daniel Bell: Must we not distinguish between criticism of the state of Israel and criticism of some of its policies, much as one would distinguish between criticism of a regime while still being a believer in the society? There is often strong disagreement between Shimon Peres and Yitzhak Shamir. Since 1967, when my emotions about Israel were directly engaged, I have been a supporter of Mapai and thus have also been critical of Likud. I am also a supporter of the Peace Now movement, many of whose active members have been members of the Israeli military. Does opposition to the adventurism of Ariel Sharon or to the annexationist dreams of a Geula Cohen make one "anti-Israel"? More importantly, I do not understand the "thrust" of the COMMENTARY statement, since it leads to the questions: what is wrong with criticizing Israeli policies and doing so in public? I always assumed that such an attitude was a healthy one. (Look at poor Boris Yeltsin, who went "public.") There would seem to be a "hidden agenda" in the COMMENTARY statement; if so, what is it?

DANIEL BELL, *Henry Ford II Professor of Social Sciences at Harvard, is spending the academic year as the Pitt Professor at King's College, Cambridge, England. His books include* The Winding Passage, The Coming of Post-Industrial Society, *and* The End of Ideology.

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Eric M. Breindel: The answer to COMMENTARY's first question about whether my "attitudes toward Israel" have changed in recent years is a simple no—assuming that the term "attitudes," in this context, refers to underlying sensibilities. My affection and concern for Israel are constant and unconditional.

I believe that Israel's existence as a Jewish state is a necessary and normal historical circumstance; that Israel's existence gives meaning to the notion of Jewish peoplehood; and that a world without the state of Israel should—for Jews—be unimaginable.

That there needs to be one place on earth where Jews from every corner of the world can—if need be—take refuge is a proposition whose truth has been amply demonstrated by history, both pre- and post-1948.

There would have been no Jewish awakening in the Soviet Union, and no possibility of a Jewish emigration movement in the USSR, without the existence of a Jewish state (a fact in no way challenged by the inclination of many Soviet Jews to go to the United States). Yet without an Israel, anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union would doubtless have continued, and might even have become more severe.

Jews in Arab lands could well have suffered untold persecution had there been no Jewish state to which they could flee. And anyone who thinks that anti-Jewish sentiment in the Arab and Muslim world is solely a response to Zionism ought to consider not just the pre-Balfour Declaration history of the Jews in the Maghreb and the Levant, but also the fate of non-Muslim minorities under Khomeini and his brethren.

Israel, in other words, has fulfilled its Zionist purpose as a Jewish homeland. And it will doubtless continue to do so: first as a place of refuge for Jews who are, in varying degrees, oppressed, since there is no indication that anti-Semitism is about to disappear; and second as a country for Jews who prefer a Jewish state even to the United States, the most glorious Diaspora in Jewish history, or Western Europe.

This sort of "fulfillment" seems to me the kind that matters most. But it's also a happy fact that Israel is a more pleasant place to live than most countries in the world; a freer society than most; and, for that matter, a more secure and stable enterprise than, say, most of the UN member-states—despite the fact that Israel is surrounded by nations pledged to destroy it.

That all this, plus an extraordinary cultural life and (relatively speaking) a high degree of social cohesion, has been possible in a society permanently under siege leaves one only to wonder what a day or two of peace might bring.

And while peace isn't exactly in the offing, the fact of the treaty with Egypt, the effort by Communist states to reestablish diplomatic ties, and the inclination of many African countries to do the same, all leave Israel in a better position now, from a diplomatic standpoint, than at any previous point in its history.

SO MUCH for the good news. The bad news, of course, is that over the past five years, American Jews have indeed engaged, as never before, in public attacks on Israel—attacks, moreover, that frequently go unrebutted.

The most insidious aspect of these attacks is that they hail from groups and individuals who profess sympathy with the Zionist undertaking—they appear, in other words, disguised as "concern." There is, to be sure, still unreconstructed anti-Israel agitation carried out by ultra-Orthodox elements—no more than in the past, probably less—and by the few remaining followers of the old "assimilationist" creed of the American Council for Judaism. But the Jewish voices raised in criticism of Israel that are audible to the American public at large belong to individuals and groups which identify themselves as sympathetic to Israel.

Many of these critics had no encounter of any kind with Israel before they began attacking it. Protesting Israeli policies in the occupied territories, or Israeli policy during the war in Lebanon, was an inaugural experience in "Zionism" for a fair number of the writers, artists, and professors who signed the manifestoes critical of Israel that proliferated a few years ago.

Almost always, these documents—and statements issued by groups like Breira—began by expressing disappointment in Israel's failure to measure up to the Zionist ideal, thus implying past enthusiasm for that ideal. But some of the key players in these endeavors have been altogether disingenuous. They come from a staunchly anti-Zionist left-wing tradition—socialist, Trotskyist, whatever. Others in this class of critics have their roots in the contemporary liberal-Left political culture and never gave Israel a moment's thought, one way or the other, until attacking it became fashionable within that culture.

But there is yet another element in this "more-in-sorrow-than-in-anger" school of criticism—individuals who can legitimately claim the title "friend" (or, in some cases, "ex-friend") of Israel. And this group lends credibility to the entire school.

Are the activities of these critics dangerous? Yes—their efforts help to legitimate the anti-Israel rhetoric of forces blatantly hostile to Israel. No doubt it would be a mistake to exaggerate the importance of these "more-in-sorrow-than-in-anger" critics in the American Jewish community. But they are there—and their numbers may well be growing.

ERIC M. BREINDEL *is the editorial-page editor of the New York* Post *and a syndicated columnist.*

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Joel Carmichael: The validity of Zionism, the *raison d'être* of the state of Israel, has certainly been lacerated over the past four decades.

Israel was self-created; an active Jewish (Zionist) minority had succeeded, by the end of World War I, in becoming a factor of world history. Accepted by the League of Nations, the Zionists built up an infrastructure between the two wars that after World War II was expanded into a state recognized, in turn, by the United Nations. Even with the loss of the vast reservoir of Jews destroyed by the Holocaust, especially Polish Jewry, this state has sustained itself after a series of wars with surrounding Arab states.

Propped up by the support of the United States, and with hopes of a substantial *aliyah*, Israel might have seemed at the outset to be a unique phenomenon—a state revived after two millennia. But the difficulties, pointed out by critics both hostile and friendly, that have emerged since the beginning may reasonably be taken to have eroded the foundation of the new state.

Aliyah, first of all, has been negligible, in terms both of the need and of the response from the Diaspora. The exception, of course, has been the involuntary *aliyah* from the Arab world after the establishment of the state, which now makes up more than half the population of Israel, without being necessarily Zionist in outlook.

At the other end, the Marxism endemic among the "Left" Israeli parties has remained a potentially doubtful factor in the general world view of Israelis; the kibbutzim, vital in the early phase of establishing the state, retain elements profoundly skeptical of, not to say alienated from, Zionism. In particular, such elements fundamentally contest the validity of the Jewish claim to the land, to say nothing of the zeal required to defend it.

In the Diaspora, countless Jews reflect this same attitude of negation, camouflaged by lip-service to the idea of Israel. "Universalism," in one form or another, retains its potency as a source of practical hostility to the conduct of any particular Israeli government

Religious frictions, manifest from the outset of the Zionist movement but seemingly accommodated, more or less, for the first few decades of the state, have lately been surfacing with rapidly growing violence. The democratic framework of the state, which enables a swing vote to extract inordinate concessions from the bigger parties, has had the effect of intensifying the civil-war atmosphere commonplace in Jewish communal life since the Enlightenment. Extremist elements on many sides, drawing moral and financial support from the Diaspora, seem to be edging toward the likelihood of bloodshed as though it were a natural consequence of an inherent irreconcilability.

All this is taking place against the background of the most sinister development now looming up within Israel itself: Arab hostility, contradicting the original Zionist optimism about an eventually acceptable community of interest between Jews and Arabs, has now been massively fortified by a fundamental fact—the Arab birth rate.

If we add to this the strategic hostility of the Soviet Union, with its many allies, agents, and puppets, a vast question mark may well seem to overhang the existence of the state of Israel.

NEVERTHELESS, the foundation of Israel is solid: in foreign affairs the United States is still the guarantor of Israel, for practical as well as idealistic reasons. Domestically, the Israeli economy has realized some of the hopes held out for it by enthusiastic Zionists at the beginning: with all its faults, it is resourceful and productive. Despite the crushing burden of armaments, the economy is viable. And the Arabs, despite all their rhetoric, have proved incapable of uniting in action; or rather, since the bulk of ordinary Arabs are indifferent, practically speaking, to the intransigence of their political elites, for the foreseeable future successful wars cannot be mounted by Arab forces alone.

Thus, if one uses a real-life criterion for judging the fulfillment of early hopes, it must be said that there has been something well-nigh miraculous both about the creation and endurance of the Israeli state.

It is true that the hopes of visionaries have been to some extent disappointed, but visions cannot be realized in full, particularly the visions of those who—soaring above the humdrum reality of Israel's becoming "like all the nations"—require the country to be uniquely moral, uniquely impeccable, before according it their support.

CRITICISM of Israel may be helpful; it is in any case unavoidable. But it is generally presumptuous to think that advice from outside will have much effect on people living in Israel, who are bound to trust their own experts, even with respect to "public opinion" abroad.

We must, however, distinguish between honest criticism and the willful nagging generated by the countless enemies of Israel whose true agenda is hidden. It is obvious that those Jews who have become hostile to Israel because it is not perfect project their moral disappointment, genuine or feigned, as a camouflage for active hostility from a wide variety of angles (generally some form of universalism, most often Marxism).

This is all part of the landscape of the recent past: the major problem facing Israel now, in a long run that has become very short, is surely the statistics of Arab demography. It may be necessary, in the near future, to consider practical solutions of the problem and to contemplate an extension of the population transfers that in any case underlie Israeli society, with some 800-900,000 Jews having been propelled into Israel by the various expulsions from Arab countries after 1948.

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The five million square miles of total Arab territory, or even the one million contiguous with Israel, could obviate all such problems.

If territorial accommodation to the Arab birth rate could be achieved and there were a serious *aliyah* at last, and if the United States, and the West in general, survive the current Soviet expansion, Israel (whose fate is surely bound up with the fate of the West) could then serve as a new beacon of hope, both practical and, for that matter, visionary.

JOEL CARMICHAEL, *the editor of* Midstream, *is the author of* Karl Marx: The Passionate Logician *and* The Shaping of the Arabs, *among other books.*

Paul Cowan: My attitude toward Israel has fluctuated lovingly over the past decades. When I was a boy, the subject was rarely discussed in my parents' house. My very assimilated mother and father seemed to be a-Zionists, not Zionists or anti-Zionists. When I was just seven or eight, my father would rouse me out of bed so that I could see history being made on TV. I remember the night Strom Thurmond walked out of the 1948 Democratic convention, but I have no memory of Israel's War of Independence, no memory of statehood.

Nevertheless, Israel became very important to me. In 1961, I decided to escape Harvard University's very Protestant version of American history and literature and find myself among my people by spending a year in Israel. I believed my visit there would solve the mystery of my family's assimilation, and tell me who I was as a Jew.

I loved the country. The tough sabra arrogance that annoys so many Americans appealed to me from the moment I encountered it. These people were casually proud of the fact that they were Jews. It was an attitude I wanted to adopt.

For four months that year I taught the children of North African immigrants in the town of Beersheba. I was impressed by Israel's efforts to furnish them a decent education, to find them jobs, to provide them with housing. I also knew many Israelis of European background in the city. Many of them had come to Beersheba, a poor, hot town, because the idea of working with new immigrants appealed to their idealistic nationalism. Nevertheless, some talked about North Africans in much the same way white Southerners talked about blacks. So I was acutely aware of the tensions between Sephardi and Ashkenazi Jews, but so were most Israelis. In Beersheba the subject of immigrant absorption was discussed with a raw, informed passion. It seemed to me the bold, ethnically insensitive, humanly unworkable effort to settle so many people was testimony to Israel's passion for equality; to the prejudices and injustices that passion would always create; and to the creativity and idealism at the country's core.

In those days, I'd meet American college students who complained that Israel was not Zion—not the place they'd dreamed of in their synagogue youth groups. They lived in their American-bred fantasies, not in Israel. I was glad that I wasn't encumbered with those fantasies; they bred a double standard. And I was glad I'd spent time with North Africans in Beersheba, not among other Americans. I felt immersed in Israel, not in ideas about Israel. From then on, I've always distrusted the opinions of well-meaning outsiders who spend a day or two in some newsworthy place, talk to the usual Israeli interviewees (those who speak English), and then discuss Israel in terms of their own preconceptions.

LIKE most American Jews, I felt a surge of pride in the Six-Day War. I wanted to go to Israel and fight in it. But those were the Vietnam years, and the peace movement was at the core of my intellectual and social life. Since I was dovish about American foreign policy it seemed logical to be dovish about Israel, too. When I spent the summer of 1979 and some weeks in 1980 there, dovishness seemed like prudent politics. I remember driving through Nablus and realizing—as I still realize—that there is no way a city of Arab nationalists can be governed without authoritarianism and violence. The newspapers make that clear every day. It doesn't matter whether last December's violence on the Gaza Strip was provoked by Israelis or Palestinians; the occupation itself has become a dance of death.

That's an easy rhetorical flourish, but it's just the beginning of the question. For one has to ask whether the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is soluble at all. Does liberalism—compromise, constructive dialogue—make sense in that situation? Would a return of the West Bank bring about peace? Or (to ask the unaskable of a dove) is toughness now necessary?

How could an American tailor such questions to Israeli reality? Certainly, we have to understand Israeli political categories instead of using terms like liberal and conservative, hawk and dove, that we've developed out of our own culture. I think we have to know much more about North African Jews—the other Israel, the ethnic majority. For example, it's useful for a liberal like me to talk with working-class Sephardi Jews. In doing so one realizes that some of their xenophobic feelings about Arabs arise out of memories of family experiences in North Africa. One sees as well that their anger at movements like Peace Now has a great deal to do with their resentment of the privileged college students who belong to them.

But what is their vision of the Israel they will soon control? Do they have different ideas about democracy, about justice, from those we usually

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associate with Ashkenazi Israel? For that matter, is there a "they"—or just a patchwork of people who happen to be of North African descent? In 1979, I realized that these questions were crucial to an understanding of Israel's future, but they are seldom discussed in the American Jewish press. It's one of the reasons we debate the Israel that exists in our head—not the one that exists in the world.

AFTER that visit, I found I couldn't write about Israel. I knew too little. Oddly, that feeling grew stronger after the invasion of Lebanon. The invasion seemed immoral and imprudent to me, and I signed the usual dovish ads. But they made me uneasy. I didn't care about washing dirty linen in public. If Israel can survive inflation, the problems of absorbing millions of new immigrants, the constant threat of terrorism, it can certainly survive media skirmishes among American intellectuals. But I felt increasingly unwilling to be a participant in those skirmishes. I felt as if most of us (I'm excluding people who immerse themselves in Israeli life) were using a people and a culture we barely understand to fit our liberal or conservative polemics. In other words, whatever our politics, we tended to use Israel as a weapon in the domestic war American Jews are always waging against one another.

I don't want to add my voice to that cacophony of opinions, even though I think the debate itself is a sign of Jewish health and of our acceptance in America.

So let a thousand flowers bloom—a thousand writers and intellectuals disagree about Israel's political policies. But I won't be among them until I have reexperienced the country, in all its marvelous complexity, with a full, informed, and feeling mind and heart.

PAUL COWAN *is a staff writer for the* Village Voice *and the author of* An Orphan in History *and (with Rachel Cowan)* Mixed Blessings.

Werner J. Dannhauser: When the UN voted for the partition of Palestine in 1947, I was an enthusiastic member of the Labor Zionist youth movement called Habonim. That night, my friends and I got drunk for the first time. Our dreams of a Jewish state had come true—but I did not really want to live in such a Jewish state, or at least my desire to go to college proved stronger than my desire to go to Israel.

Now Israel is young at forty and I am no longer young, but on a recent visit I realized that my urge to live in Israel threatened to overpower my urge to stay in America.

What caused me to be overwhelmed was not my vestigial Zionism, but simply the living land in its dense "thereness," a place where so many live heroically without false heroics, a society in which people of all kinds keep fashioning for themselves a real life. I had of course heard and read much about the various tensions that are supposed to be tearing Israel apart. At close hand, they loom large enough, but if they are not of the kind one can solve, they are at least of the kind one can muddle through. Here assertions must serve as arguments: the Left showed itself more patriotic and the Right more flexible than I had feared, and I found a glimmer of hope that Orthodoxy was coming to understand its duty to deal with ultra-Orthodoxy. Moreover, beneath the parliamentary wrangling and media hysteria, I discovered political debate so weighty and thoughtful that it must surely be, I thought, the envy of the Free World.

After forty years, I can say that the only reason Israel has not lived up to my expectations is that it has exceeded them.

THE establishment of the state of Israel certainly failed to solve the Jewish problem, but that should have come as a disappointment only to those so imprisoned by the idea of progress that they mistook Zionism for magic. More importantly, Israel's continuing vulnerability has much to do with the amazingly shallow understanding of anti-Semitism found in early Zionist theory. It is true that Jew-hatred, so very much alive and well, would thrive even if profoundly understood, but a good deal hinges on confronting it soberly and intelligently. To grapple with its demonic depths requires leaving the political realm in which Zionism is most at home and nurturing a philosophical or theological perspective.

But Israel's accomplishments are nevertheless manifold and complex. Jews all over the world walk with greater pride upon the face of the earth because of the state of Israel, and this rivals in significance the haven Israel has offered, and continues to offer, to Jews fleeing oppression in other countries. Beyond that one can point to a vigorous Israeli literature that I, at least, would never have expected. Above all, most of us Zionists, Labor Zionists in particular, underestimated what Israel would accomplish for Judaism. I think of the flowering of Jewish scholarship in Israel, the revitalization of talmudic studies, the flourishing of yeshivas, the aura of a living faith that even agnostic Jews experience in Jerusalem, and not only in Jerusalem. Year by year, day by day, it becomes more hollow to say that one is pro-Jewish but anti-Israeli.

THE upsurge of criticism is sometimes healthy, much more often dangerous, and above all inevitable. Indifference to Israel becomes increasingly difficult to sustain, yielding to love or hate, both

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of which are voluble (we are a voluble people). Israel's proud independence necessarily means that it does what it thinks best without asking us. Moreover, the problem of dual loyalty, slighted by your questionnaire, seems real enough to me. Those of us who love both the United States and Israel love two nations with different national interests, and if that isn't a problem I don't know what is. Our agony over the Pollard case did not dishonor us, Shlomo Avineri's obtuse remarks to American Jews notwithstanding. We worry and at times we are called upon to speak up, to speak out.

But when we speak, what platforms and forums should we use? I believe in the rule: "Tell it not in Gath and publish it not in the streets of Ashkelon." But rules have exceptions, especially when applied to exceptional countries like Israel, and reticence in public speech has seen better days. I have but one suggestion in regard to our dilemma. As the saying goes, it is the tone that makes the music, and what accounts for the tone of our criticism of Israel depends on our fundamental stance toward the Jewish state. Genuine love of Israel—which means that one thinks of Israel as one's own—confers a right, and even a duty, to criticize. But when one's own child, say, or spouse, does wrong, one becomes sorrowful, protective; one tries to see the offense in the best possible light. One need not blind oneself to blemishes, but one remains bonded to one's own, attaching no strings to one's willingness to help and no conditions to one's love.

Frankly, Jews who see Israel in what many consider a dispassionate light and what I consider the disingenuousness of feigned neutrality—such Jews appall me. They refuse to grant Israel the sympathy so many other causes call forth in them. And I consider beyond the pale most Jews—too many of them, alas—who harbor ill will toward Israel, the intellectuals who can't forgive the country for failing to heed their advice, the moralizers who are lenient with themselves and strict with others, the high priests of the politics of resentment, the wicked sons of the seder Haggadah who say "you" and not "we" when it comes to Jews.

Criticism of Israel can be legitimate. The possibility that Israel may soon have to choose between remaining democratic and remaining secure can cause heartbreak. In any event, it precludes our silence. Ample opportunity exists for benevolent and heated controversy. The *legitimate* participants in that discussion will be those who think in terms of *our* Israel and who know that the children of Israel can no longer survive as a people without the state of Israel.

WERNER J. DANNHAUSER *is professor of government at Cornell University.*

Midge Decter: Without my being aware that it was happening, my feelings about Israel over the years came to be radically altered. You might say that they turned from hot to cold—or more precisely, from a molten mass to a block of granite. You see, I was a young Zionist, born and bred in Zionist theory and Zionist sentiment. And as is the case with all theoretical and sentimental Zionists, most especially young ones, my passion about the necessity for a Jewish homeland was entirely instrumental: the more I loved my commitment to Zion the more I demanded of it. (Purely instrumental passions, calculations of so much moral profit received for so much loyalty given, nowadays travel under the name of "ideals.") Israel, then, was in my emotional and intellectual economy destined to be a kind of miraculous place. Created out of an act of long overdue international justice, the country was, at once and at last, to be a safe haven for Jews, a model of social existence, and a rich ground for the efflorescence of a new and lovely Jewish culture. Because it needed to be all these in order to satisfy my aspirations, I in turn needed to believe that these aspirations were in fact being realized.

Forty short years later the state of Israel is something far more—or if you insist, far less—than a foolish young woman's pieties allowed for. What it is is an extremely messy (though considering the mess, an astonishingly stable) Western democratic society under constant threat. To say that the Jews are hardly any safer than before is an understatement, though for the first time in millennia they do have weapons in their hands and great skill in using them. As for Jewish culture, Israel has turned out to be a community of 20th-century Jews more or less like any other.

How could it be otherwise? People who live in a real country—never mind that it is still visibly and palpably the Holy Land and, as ever throughout history, a place of holy turmoil—lead real, which is to say ordinary, lives. It is the sin of Zionism to aspire to, not the sin of Israel to fail to achieve, the New Jerusalem.

But of course, the matter does not rest there, not for me and not for any other Jew. Jewish history and the God Who presides over it always seem to have an ace up their sleeve. Because giving up one's youthful Zionism does not free one from anxiety about the condition or the future of Israel. Quite the contrary. It would be so much easier to be the kind of Zionist or anti-Zionist—there are many of both around, and it is no longer so easy to tell them apart—who continues to strike the idealists' bargain: you be good according to my lights, and I will love you.

For those of us whose hearts have turned to stone, love is utterly beside the point. We know ourselves to be bound by ties so deep, so essential, so unconditional, that they are beyond daylight examination. We were spoken for before ever we

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were born, and before Israel was born. Why? To what end? By whom? I have answers to these questions, or think I do, but neither the questions nor the answers interest me very much. To be a Jew is not an act, it is a fate. The existence of Israel is absolutely central to that fate. The rest is mere details—knowable, unknowable, it makes no difference.

WHICH brings me to the problem of whether one may or may not "criticize" the Israelis. The answer is, of course, one *may*. Who can stop one? Nothing has been so dishonest as the complaint, on the part of Jews and non-Jews alike, that they are somehow being deprived of their right openly to speak their condemnations of Israel. Indeed, it has usually been in the very course of condemning that Israel's critics have complained of being silenced. They do not actually mean that they are being silenced. The true source of their complaint is that they find themselves in turn being criticized by others. They seem to imagine that where it concerns them, the First Amendment guarantees not only free speech but universal moral approval.

The problem is not whether one has the right to attack Israeli policy or conduct but whether one is in the right in doing so. This is complicated, for it depends where and when, by whom, on what issue, for what reason, with what degree of truthfulness, with what intended consequence, and perhaps above all, in what tone of voice. An easy case, however, are those American Jews, self-professed lovers of Zion, who wring their hands in public at the failure of the Israelis to take this or that action, almost always a self-destructive one, which would make Israel and its supporters so much more attractive. These are today's believers in romantic love: they want Israel not only to be good but to *look* good, at whatever cost. They are exactly like those Americans—are in fact in large part also numbered among them—whose so-called attachment to the ideals of their country impels them to advocate positions inimical to its safety and well-being. With such affectionate critics a country is hardly in need of enemies.

In the end, more than anything else, it is the hypocrisy of all this hot concern that overwhelms one. If these people really knew what Israel should do for itself—or even felt they did—they would be as gods. Israel is for the foreseeable future a country with no safe or satisfactory choices. Simply to name a policy, or its opposite, is to uncover one or another grave peril. Assuming they are not merely disguised enemies looking forward to its destruction, Israel's critics in their self-assurance can know only one thing with certainty: and that is, what Israel is supposed to do to make *them* feel more comfortable in remaining committed to it. That, plain and simple, is what they advocate. And that is why in my new-found cold-heartedness I feel nothing but contempt for them.

For my part, I am bound by the modern Jewish imperative: Israel must live. Since I do not daily share its danger, it is not for me to reason how.

MIDGE DECTER *is executive director of the Committee for the Free World. Her books include* The Liberated Woman & Other Americans, The New Chastity, *and* Liberal Parents, Radical Children.

Maier Deshell: First, some (no doubt stock) personal observations, prompted by this symposium: I find myself, almost forty years after the creation of the state of Israel—and a lifelong Zionist—an anomaly and anachronism (what does it mean still to be a Zionist today?). The reborn Jewish commonwealth, to which I devoted my youthful ardor and my more mature support, has been awaiting me, so to speak, for four decades now; and yet, even believing as I do—that only by casting one's personal lot with Israel can one realize an authentic Jewish existence—here I remain in exile, doing whatever it is I do and, from time to time, taking up the polemical cudgels on Israel's behalf (an increasingly necessary activity, alas). Not a unique situation, to be sure, and one that has even produced a modest literature.

Well, over the course of time one comes to terms with the paradoxes of one's fate. At least, I solace myself, I have not notably contributed to the overwhelming statistics of American Jewish attrition and corrosion. In my professional life, at any rate, as part of my (let us say) Jewish communal and cultural work, I have always sought to maintain some kind of coterminous association with the Israeli evolution—and Israel, to my mind, with all due respect for the not inconsiderable American Jewish achievement, is where the true Jewish action resides. Israel—that is, Jewish national life redivivus—is for me an absolute article of Jewish faith and fate; the state's actuality, remembering a time (not all that long ago) when there was no Israel, remains an undiminished matter of amazement, as well as sustenance. In short, Jewish life without Israel, wherever that life may be, both in terms of immediate imperatives and longer historical perspectives, is simply unthinkable.

These are hardly exceptional sentiments and yet, in a time of unease and confusion—I agree with the framers of this symposium that the cause of Israel has suffered a certain erosion in the minds and cares of a growing number of American Jews—they seem to warrant restating, to wave the Zionist flag, if you will.

How to account for the shift in attitude? The litany of cause and effect, in no particular order, is quite familiar: the passage of time, for one thing (how long can unalloyed passion for Israel, from our comfortable distance, be sustained?); the

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weariness and impatience that come from having to deal with Israel almost exclusively in terms of recurrent crisis (and that often translates into "disappointment" with the Israeli performance); the flexing of muscle on the part of the organized American Jewish community, which strives to establish an independent identity and to define its agenda and *raison d'être* in terms of particularistic necessities (and which, on occasion, will even include "criticism" of Israeli policies); other vested interests—religious, academic, cultural—whose primacy is often asserted by the downplaying, if not outright denigration, of Israeli significance; the rise of the Herut movement as a permanent political force in Israel, which, though a legitimate and democratic development, is viewed as anathema by many liberal American Jews, affording an excuse for withdrawal of support from Israel; the seepage of left-wing Israel-bashing into the mainstream; the reemergence of the "traditions of opposition to Zionism" (what a witty friend calls the "return of the repressed"), which seem to fill the spiritual vacuum for some American Jews; the coming of age and to leadership of an American Jewish generation raised on the self-assertions and narcissisms of the 60's. The list could surely be extended.

Israel, of course, is not entirely "innocent" in this development, feeding, as it inevitably must (what polity is perfect?), the fires of the fault-finders. Its politics are messy; its society contentious; its scandals proliferate; its social and economic—and not least of all, security—problems many and difficult of solution. Nor can Israel boast all the niceties of the democratic West. To that extent, if one is so inclined, one can say that Israel has "disappointed . . . the hopes vested in it." But that is surely vacuous and self-serving. One does not even have to be a Zionist of my stripe to give the Israeli successes their full due—and for which we should all be thankful.

As to how I regard the "upsurge of Jewish criticism of Israel," I view it darkly. If it continues unchecked—and these things have a way of snowballing—there is a real danger that the criticism will become so institutionalized, so internalized, so pervasive, so "respectable" as to endanger the fragile Jewish unity that—the critics notwithstanding—depends on a strong Israel-consciousness.

Some of this criticism, to be sure, is well-meaning and seen by its proponents as "constructive." That may very well be, and to that extent, I suppose, it is "healthy." But much of the criticism is also misguided and tendentious, and in its extreme expression pernicious, giving license to Israel's ill-wishers. Indeed, this latter variety of criticism, in evidence since 1967 and now more flagrant than ever, has become indistinguishable from hostility to all Jewish national aspirations; it goes beyond criticism of specific Israeli policies such as the invasion of Lebanon and the occupation of the West Bank to an antipathy to the very idea of a Jewish state. As Nathan Glazer has written in this regard: "There seems such a strong element of ignorance, of malevolence, of sheer malice in the attack on Zionism that it is hard to see in it any part of legitimate political opposition to a political movement."

Nevertheless, I suspect that the vast majority of American Jews—neither as vociferous nor as accessible to the public media as the critics—persist in their traditional views; they continue to believe in Israel as a life-giving source, as a center of national feeling and an abode for the collective memory of Jewish national consciousness, and they express their support accordingly. For such Jews, myself included, Israel, for better or for worse, is the bottom Jewish line. *Ein breira*, as we Zionists used to say. What alternative is there?

MAIER DESHELL *is the editor of* Congress Monthly, *published by the American Jewish Congress, and was formerly editor-in-chief of the Jewish Publication Society.*

Leonard Fein: I am not aware that "criticism of the state of Israel by American Jews" is either "open" or "widespread" or "bitter," or that such criticism as does take place is rooted in "traditions of opposition to Zionism." The suggestion that it is confuses criticism of Israeli government policies, which has plainly increased since the Lebanon war, with criticism of the state itself—obviously, a very different matter. That is a dangerous confusion.

One explanation for the rise in criticism of Israeli *government* policies is that those policies deserve to be criticized. The historical reluctance of American Jewry openly to voice criticism has finally been breached by the general deterioration of Israeli politics and, more specifically, by the dismal performance of the incumbent government of national unity. I say "dismal performance" knowing that while very many (most?) Israelis would share that view, it will shock very many (most?) American Jews, who have traditionally imputed heroic qualities to Israel's people and to its governors.

This is not the place to argue the government's record; the question here is the American Jewish tradition. Given the venomous glee with which Israel is attacked by its enemies, one understands the disposition of Israel's friends to refrain from all criticism. But the price of that abstention is grievously high: in time, we ourselves lose the ability to know whether our restraint is substantive or tactical. Though we may begin by seeking to insulate Israel from criticism, we end by viewing Israel as beyond criticism. But if Israel is beyond criticism, those who pose as its critics are

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in truth its enemies. Does Israel have so many friends that we can lightly afford to mislabel them?

A second explanation: one of my daughters tells me that among her fellow graduate students (mostly not Jews), there is some surprise when they learn of her devotion to Israel. Increasingly, it seems, they have bought into the sleazy anti-Israel propaganda that infects the ongoing debate over these matters. If my daughter's task as a lover of Zion is to try to persuade her colleagues that there is another view, is she best-advised to pretend to blindness, to depict "her" Israel as flawless, or is it wiser for her to acknowledge that she, too, sees flaws, but that those flaws are not the whole of Israel's story? Shall Israel's legitimacy be made contingent on the unfailing wisdom of its policies (what state would pass that test?) or shall we insist on a distinction between legitimacy and perfection?

THIS does not mean that Jewish criticism of Israel is risk-free. On balance, it has seemed to me over the years that the arguments for open discussion and debate are weightier than the arguments against. I have believed that it is important to insist that there is a place to stand with Israel that is not at the right hand of its governors, whatever their party and their policies. For if there is no such place, I fear that significant numbers of American Jews will abandon the fight for Israel's safety and welfare.

If our choice as a community is to stonewall, to pretend that all's well, then we leave the field of criticism to the enemy. That seems to me an exceedingly dangerous abdication. The attentive audience will then be forced to choose between the strident and slashing critique and a defense that lacks all plausibility. And if the audience overhears our intracommunal argument, in which cheap and even evil motives are casually imputed to those who speak critically, it will come to believe precisely that which we seek to deny—that those Jews who criticize Israel do not support it.

So, for example, when a mainstream American Jewish organization (the American Jewish Congress) finally has the temerity to endorse the position of the foreign minister of Israel as against the position of Israel's prime minister with regard to the merits of an international peace conference, its "break" with tradition is deemed worthy of front-page coverage in the American press and is taken as a symptom of disunity among Israel's principal supporters. Such absurd interpretations, which (I imagine) do indeed give aid and comfort to Israel's enemies, are the unavoidable consequence of the childish doctrine that American Jews ought to be cheerleaders for whatever the policies that Israel's government of the day adopts.

There are other and more pressing questions regarding the relationship between the two great centers of contemporary Jewish life, and discussion of these has been too long deferred. There is these days a widespread and growing disappointment, both in Israel and among American Jews, with the way things are unfolding in Israel. Lovers of Zion in both places wander aimlessly about, moaning, "Woe unto us, what has happened to the dream?" What has happened, or what is happening, or what ought, at any rate, to be happening, is that we are learning, not without pain and dislocation, that the dream was a response to our own needs rather than to any plausible reality. For diverse reasons, we came to view Israel as more a faith than a place. Now, at last, its placeness is catching up with us. Israel is a place, and because it is, it is flawed, as all places are. It is no great achievement that we have been able to defend the mythic Israel; our new challenge is to learn how to defend, with equal skill and energy, the flawed Israel.

Along the way to that learning, some people have moved beyond disappointment toward bitterness. In their view, Israel has betrayed them, made a nightmare of their dream. But the challenge before Israel's wakeful friends is to shape a second-generation response to Israel, one that stakes out a ground somewhere between the mindless claque and the equally mindless lynch mob.

A serious American Jewish community must also reassess the classic Zionist position that assigned to all Diaspora communities a peripheral role in Jewish history. American Jews are only now developing a sense of self-worth as Jews, only now coming to appreciate the range of American Jewish possibility. That bumps squarely into the classic Zionist perception, and leads to misunderstandings and distortions that may, if unattended, poison the relationship between the two centers. There is no developed theory that can accommodate both classic Zionism and the new self-respect of American Jewry, and the development of such a theory seems to me a more urgent requirement of our time than the futile effort to insist that we not break ranks.

LEONARD FEIN, *founding editor of* Moment *magazine, is a writer and teacher who is, this year, visiting scholar at the Religious Action Center in Washington, D.C. His* Where Are We? The Inner Life of America's Jews *will be published this spring by Harper & Row.*

Maurice Friedberg: Because Israel's domestic and foreign policies remain, essentially, unchanged, I have found no reason in recent years to change my attitudes toward Israel. Such, at least, is my impression based on considerable reading and almost annual visits to that country. Israel continues as a haven for persecuted Jews of the world, from the Europeans (and some Asians) of the Soviet Union to the

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black Jews of Ethiopia. At war with all its neighbors except for Egypt (and the peace there remains frigid indeed), and exposed also to ongoing Arab terrorist activity, Israel retains all of the attributes of a truly democratic state. Deputies to the Knesset include pro-Moscow Communists, ultra-Orthodox rabbis, admirers of Yasir Arafat, and Meir Kahane. Demonstrations protesting a dizzying variety of causes—from alleged government expropriation of Arab lands to violations of the Sabbath and possible desecration of ancient graves—all enjoy police protection and are subject also to police supervision. Commissions of inquiry into such sensitive problems as the war in Lebanon and treatment of terrorist prisoners—a rarity in other democracies in peacetime—have become almost routine. And in spite of the constraints that the democratic system imposes on the promulgation of unpopular reforms, Israel has—through a series of stringent austerity measures—recently succeeded in bringing to a virtual halt a galloping inflation that threatened to destroy the country's economy. With all that, Israel remains a steadfast member of the small community of genuinely free nations that stand ready to defend that freedom.

A great many people have pinned on Israel all sorts of hopes, not a few of them mutually exclusive. Some saw it as an embodiment of millenarian socialist dreams—resolutely secular, it goes without saying. Others, just as fervently, prayed for Israel to become the incarnation of strict religious observance that was formerly enforceable, at best, only within the confines of individual households. There were many who hoped that Israel would truly become a "light unto the nations," where disbelief would disappear and error be no more, whence corruption and greed would be banished forever and ever. Needless to say, such unrealistic expectations were bound to be disappointed. Israel, like it or not, is a country inhabited by ordinary mortals who are, moreover, suffering from battle fatigue and the array of traits it engenders—impatience, intolerance, a thirst for comforts taken for granted elsewhere but unaffordable in a state of siege. Moreover, a democratic system makes compromises inevitable and these, in turn, create a sense of betrayal and capitulation among all the parties to the social contract. Hence, Israel is a disappointment to "idealistic" socialists as much as it is to the ultra-Orthodox *haredim* from Mea Shearim or from Brooklyn. I still recall, many years ago, a Neturei Karta advertisement protesting autopsies in Israel in terms so vicious that I wondered whether it might not be an Arab forgery.

THE upsurge of Jewish criticism of Israel is decidedly not healthy and is potentially quite dangerous. Much of it is ill-informed and irresponsible, not very constructive, and, on occasion, unseemly as well. In the final analysis, there is something immoral about people living in the safety of America telling the Israelis what they must do in policy choices that are literally matters of life and death. Paradoxically, such criticism serves to create the impression that, instead of acting here as friends of Israel, American Jews may be used to exert pressure *on* Israel. Indeed, there are some disquieting signs that the American Jewish community is already being manipulated in this manner. The paradox is compounded of late by attempts on the part of certain Israeli political groupings to enlist the help of American Jews for their parochial causes, thus corrupting the democratic character of Israel's political life.

Finally, a few words about the specter of dual loyalty. I submit that in a complex society an individual has not one and not two, but literally scores of loyalties. As a consumer, I may favor lower tariffs on imported Japanese cars—even though automobile workers in Detroit may brand my preference un-American (my colleagues at the University of Michigan may or may not share their opinions). Because my own salary is paid from appropriations by the legislature of a large agricultural state, I suppose that I am more sympathetic to the plight of the farmer than most New Yorkers who, as every Midwesterner knows, are not "really" American. And so on and so forth. Sympathy for the "old country" (and activity in its behalf, including lobbying in Washington) is taken for granted by Greek Americans or Polish Americans, even though neither country is currently run—in contrast to Israel—by a pro-American government.

MAURICE FRIEDBERG *is senior university scholar and professor of Russian literature at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.*

Murray Friedman: While one can differ at certain points with specific policy decisions or actions taken by its government, Israel is a tiny nation surrounded by enemies supported by the Soviet Union who would destroy it if they could. As such it has to make hard decisions involving the safety and security of its people—decisions that may incur the wrath of many as being militarily aggressive. But the exercise of power, built into the role of a state, is a far better thing than Jewish powerlessness and dependency. One remembers the days when non-Jewish friends would wring their hands about "the poor Jews" but could not or would not do much to help; I would rather that Jews have the strength to defend themselves, with all the problems this sometimes entails, than enjoy the pity of others.

I believe that Judaism, or at least Jewishness, requires Jews to adhere to broader, civilizing goals

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than pure self-interest. But I have come to resent in recent years the view, maintained by many, that Israel must be held not only to higher values than other nations but often to unrealizable objectives. It bothers me deeply, for example, that groups like the American Friends Service Committee, the New Jewish Agenda, and the Left generally focus so heavily on Israel's small amount of trade with South Africa. Why is there so little condemnation of African and Arab as well as Western nations that engage in far greater amounts of trade? There is involved here not only a large dose of hypocrisy but a more fundamental animus that has to be watched in the light of Jewish historical experience. In the circumstances in which Israel finds itself today, and as nations go, I believe it has done comparatively well in living up to its democratic traditions.

As to whether it is healthy to criticize Israel publicly, I must respond with an unequivocal yes and no. It really *does* depend. This is not ambivalence or cowardice. Should Israeli authorities be openly criticized by American Jews for the constraints placed on Reform and Conservative Judaism by a politically well-placed Orthodoxy? Of course. On the other hand, I believe American Jews should exercise restraint when Israel crosses into Lebanon to destroy the bases used by terrorists there. The rule to guide us generally, it seems to me, is whether the issue involves the safety and security of the state; Israelis who have to live with the day-to-day results of actions taken by their government to protect them must be left free to make their decisions without public pressure from their brethren abroad. On this basis, the American Jewish Congress was acting irresponsibly when it called publicly for an international conference of nations, including the Soviet Union and other countries frequently hostile to Israel, to meet with and help work out the arrangements for a peace settlement between Israel and the surrounding Arab countries. There may be an occasional exception to the rule, such as in the Pollard case; using Jonathan Pollard as a spy was presumably in line with Israel's security, but it violated the security of Israel's greatest friend and benefactor. And of course there is no question but that American Jewish bodies have a right and a responsibility to engage in private discussions with Israeli authorities on any and all subjects.

SINCE Israel is, in fact, now a part of American Jewish identity, the response of American Jews to what is happening there can hardly be limited to sending money, lobbying in the halls of Congress, or visiting as tourists. Security matters aside, the time has come to normalize the debate and discussion between the two Jewries. These should be conducted without the rancor of a Shlomo Avineri, who charged in his well-publicized "Letter to an American Friend" that the response of the American Jewish community to the Pollard case reflected "nervousness, insecurity, and even cringing," or of a Jacob Neusner, who has claimed that Israel's culture is limiting and parochial in comparison with that of the United States.

As the discussion proceeds, however, we have to be conscious of a problem: the inroads recently being made by the Left into American and Jewish political affairs. This has been highlighted in the presidential candidacy of Jesse Jackson, who has manifested his hostility to Jews and Israel by identifying with Israel's enemies abroad (even as he has attempted to spruce up his image) and by his attack on a strong American defense, so vital to Israel's and America's security.

What is most disturbing in the Jackson candidacy is the degree of respectability being given to him and, at least inferentially, to his ideas by major American political leaders and, regrettably, many Jews. Governor Mario Cuomo of New York, for example, has enthused, "To the 'passion' and 'poetry' of his 1984 campaign he has added a depth and width and a point of view." One national Jewish religious leader has noted, "Times have changed and Jesse Jackson has had the wisdom to change with the times," while the head of a major Jewish civic agency has welcomed "that certain sensitivity he is now showing." Following a recent interview with Jackson published in the leftist magazine *Tikkun*, a number of these Jewish leaders have backed off somewhat; but the utopian impulse is ever renewable. It seems we need to remind ourselves and our friends that even as the Jewish and Israeli situation has improved in important ways, it is not paranoid to recognize that we continue to have enemies.

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Nathan Glazer: I wonder how useful it is to rehearse the various grounds that once existed for opposition to either Zionism or what became the dominant strand within Zionism. I doubt that many of those participating in this symposium will take the positions dubbed Orthodox, Reform/humanist, socialist, or assimilationist in the symposium statement, or that any of these plays much role among Jewish intellectuals today. They almost without exception are committed to the security and prosperity of the state of Israel, the Jewish state, whose existence and strength have relegated all the positions listed as possible sources of criticism of Israel to obscurity. Indeed, the only pre-state tradition challenging the central Zionist vision with growing strength in Israel today is Revisionism and its present-day descendants. Of all the anti-Zionist or

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dissident Zionist positions and traditions this is the one whose heirs have led the state in the past and are likely to lead it again in the future. And it is the issues raised by a nationalism or chauvinism that breaks with the historically central line of Zionist thought and action that evoke the most troublesome questions today.

My own attitudes to Israel have not changed in recent years: it is a state like other states, better than most, unique in the Middle East in maintaining a strong democracy, still offering examples of ingenuity and commitment in maintaining its viability and security that are a source of pride to all Jews, and not doing badly in maintaining a vigorous and pluralistic Jewish culture that is a resource to Jews everywhere. The state has had one great problem since its creation, one exacerbated by its conquest of Arab-settled territories in 1967. Security seems to require the holding and settlement of Arab-settled areas; but if Israel is to remain a Jewish and democratic state these areas cannot be part of Israel. Divisions within the state, as well as the attraction of easy temporary arrangements, make it very difficult to adopt the solution I would prefer: disengagement from the conquered territories, and avoidance of the dangers of becoming either a state with a master race ruling over inferiors or a binational state. The process of settlement in these territories, advocated by the Likud and right-wing groups but acquiesced in by Labor governments, has now gone so far that this possible solution recedes ever farther.

Israel is far gone along the road of helotizing the conquered Arab population. And for the first time official voices call for forcing out the Arabs to ensure a Jewish majority state. This is to me a monstrous solution, but I can well see its attractiveness to those who have been embattled for forty years and see no respite.

I do not believe that Israel has disappointed the hopes vested in it. It had to respond and adapt to the situation in which it was placed. Zionism never looked realistically at the Arab problem. Even those who were most cognizant of it divided into those who would expel the Arabs by main force and those who would create a binational state. It seems the former were more realistic than the latter: we have had many more examples of successful expulsions in the past seventy years than of successful binational states. But I do not think it can be a successful solution for Israel, surrounded by Arab countries. A very large body of opinion in Israel is fortunately reluctant to adopt this solution. It still believes an arrangement with the Arabs is possible that does not threaten the security of Israel, that brings a measure of peace, and permits the maintenance of the state as a Jewish state.

Many American Jews support this position. But I do not see their support as criticism of Israel: Shimon Peres is as much a part of the government of Israel as is Yitzhak Shamir. I see, rather, a taking of sides on what are fateful decisions for Israel, whether to try further along the path of peace or to maintain an obdurate stand that any possible movement toward extending peace with the Arabs endangers the security of Israel, and thus all that is possible is to continue along the present line, to "create facts." The ultimate conclusion of this fact-creation will be expulsion.

Should American Jews remain silent in this debate? One path guarantees unending hostilities, the maintenance of watchful vigilance, and enormously expensive military forces as far into the future as one can see. The other course offers a slim hope that some peaceful arrangement with Israel's Arab neighbors is possible—autonomy for the Palestinian Arabs in the conquered territories or their return to Jordan. In such a settlement the Jewishness of the Jewish state is demographically ensured, and its democratic processes can be maintained. I and other Diaspora Jews feel the discomfort in participating in this debate, when we do not have to risk the awful dangers that the people of Israel live with. But all elements in Israel in this debate reach out to the Diaspora for support, not only monetary but political. They always have. One must respect the distinction between Israel and the Diaspora, between those who risk the consequences of their choices and those who do not and whose involvement may offer support to the enemies of Israel. But there are costs to all political choices, all political action. A debate is going on within Israel. When have Diaspora Jews not been involved in such debates? And why should such involvement, in which inevitably one party, one body of opinion, is going to be supported against another, be called criticism of Israel?

Nathan Glazer *is professor of education and sociology at Harvard and co-editor of the* Public Interest. *His books include* American Judaism, Ethnic Dilemmas, *and* Remembering the Answers.

Irving Greenberg: We are living through the birth pangs of a true partnership between American Jewry and Israel, built on the sense of common fate which continues to link the communities indissolubly. The generation that lived through the Holocaust and the birth of Israel is passing from the scene. The experience of Jewish history shows that those who live through great traumatic events tend to be fixed—sometimes, even paralyzed—by the experience. Later generations which encounter the event through ritual, memory, and learning are freer to apply its implications creatively.

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The next generation does not have the initial leaders' gut identification with Israel or their conception of themselves and their communities as "enablers" of Israelis; still, it is deepening the relationship. Initially, American Jews lived vicariously through the Israeli assumption of military and political power, but they took on none of the commitments or the risks of political action. In the last fifteen years, there has been explosive growth of political action and AIPAC. To fight arms sales, American Jews confronted two Presidents, rejecting intimidation by dual-loyalty charges. There has been a steady broadening of Jewish political alliances, including the rise of the neoconservatives, which reflects a maturation of political responsibility.

IN THE first stage, philanthropy was the primary relationship to Israel. In the second stage, Diaspora Jews stress greater independence for Israel through investments, opening up of free-trade zones, purchase of Israeli goods, etc. Philanthropy moves toward mutual responsibility through heightened accountability. Diaspora philanthropists fight to choose leadership and articulate policy in the Jewish Agency. Project Renewal creates relationships between American Jews and Israelis based on shared experiences of Israeli realities. Israel has begun to send money back to the Diaspora for Jewish education—out of the recognition that Israel must be concerned for the future of American Jewry. These trends have moved Israelis away from the "negation of Diaspora" ideology.

True, the shift has led to freer criticism of Israel. But the ability to give and take criticism is a sign of strength in a relationship. Moreover, as American Jews put themselves on the line for Israel politically, there is a greater moral legitimacy in judging Israeli policy. The key is the tone and nature of the criticism. Morally realistic critiques that grow out of fundamentally committed relationships strengthen the parties' commitment to each other. Delegitimating criticism, based on unreal standards that no living state can meet, will alienate the two Jewries and could endanger Israel's very existence. Therefore, those who care for the renewal of Jewish life and the creation of a model people must challenge critics—well-meaning or evil-intentioned—who undermine Israel.

We should draw confidence from the incredible accomplishments of the past forty years. Israel is stronger than ever: its population is at a peak; its Jewish social gap is being closed; its Arab minority is blossoming (in spite of some radicalization). The Gaza riots notwithstanding, Israel will trade territory and allow Palestinian self-determination for a real peace. Then Arabs and Jews will adapt to live with each other. Despite a forty-year siege, Israel has maintained a humane attitude toward Arabs; its self-corrective mechanisms continue to operate. Israel is not as fragile as its enemies hope or as its friends fear.

HAVING experienced the Holocaust, the triumph of death over life and the systematic degradation of all its values, the Jewish people responded with an unprecedented outburst of life-affirmation. Jews recognized that powerlessness was no longer compatible with upholding life or fundamental values. Therefore, they committed themselves to create the state of Israel. But Jews determined simultaneously to uphold the Jewish covenantal ethic and use their power non-idolatrously. Choosing life and power together constituted nothing less than a renewal of the Jewish covenant of life. In addition, most Zionists believed that this new society could become a model of democracy and of self-government for ex-colonies. Religious Zionists hoped that religious values would flower and be applied to all aspects of life.

The above hopes constitute open-ended goals; in pursuing them one does not arrive at a final point. Still, Israel is in the process of fulfilling the hopes that were vested in it. Israel has to struggle to maintain its decency toward Arabs in the face of repeated wars and brutal terrorism—as well as in the face of the exhilaration of unexpected victories and additional territory. It has created a democratic society, integrating East European Jews with no previous experience of democratic government and Oriental Jews who came mostly from medieval, hierarchical cultures. Israel has given dignity to women and freedom to religious minorities and all Arabs under its rule beyond anything ever experienced in that part of the Middle East. Its social and military policies have restored the value of Jewish life and, by extension, of all life. Israel has created the infrastructure for a tremendous flowering of traditional religious life and learning (which has created frictions as yet unresolved).

Israel's ethic has to be an ethic of power—inescapably flawed, using force and approximate means to achieve absolute ends. By this standard, its overall ethical performance has been exemplary. By the standards of powerlessness, i.e., perfection, its behavior is less than ideal. A judgment of fundamental disappointment (as against particular disappointments) shows an immaturity of ethical understanding—or betrays the presence of an illegitimate double standard in judging Israel. Where it leads to delegitimation, it constitutes anti-Semitism and collaboration with attempted genocide—for no other state's right to exist is made dependent on an ideal standard of behavior. For me personally, there is much room for improvement in Israel's performance, but this is true by the standard of *tikkun olam*—perfecting the world. In its human, all too human, way, Israel is in the vanguard of that very process.

My attitudes toward Israel have matured; the feeling of covenantal commitment to Israel has

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deepened. The most intense moments of Israel's life—1948, May-June 1967, the Yom Kippur War, the Lebanon invasion—have deepened the attachment. Some of the greatest religious experiences of my life were furnished by Israel's history: the exhilaration of a unified Jerusalem, the ingathering of Russian Jews, Entebbe, the rescue of Ethiopian Jewry. As the realization of the difficulties has grown, the willingness to get involved has also grown. My family and I are closer to *aliyah* than ever before because we see how much help Israel needs to accomplish its unfinished goals.

My understanding of Israel has become more realistic and more confident in recent years. The Kahan Commission set up after the Sabra-Shatila massacres made me realize how much I was prone to doubts about Israel's solidity and how wrong I was. I have come to feel that Israel needs an infusion of privatization, voluntary activity, and free enterprise whereas in the past I romanticized the kibbutz and socialism. But these changes are a natural part of an ever-growing relationship and ever-changing reality.

Overall, my conviction that this is nothing less than the Exodus of our time has grown. Whether it takes forty years or four hundred years to establish Israel, the record of the dignity and the decency, of the limitations and the failures but overall accomplishment, will some day make up a second Jewish Bible for the world. This Bible too will be studied and will shape humanity's values. Its primary message will be the same classic Jewish teaching: the triumph of love over hatred, of life over death.

IRVING GREENBERG *is president of CLAL, the National Jewish Center for Leadership and Learning.*

Ben Halpern: My answers to your first two questions are obvious, but they may serve to signify the perspective or bias that shapes my responses.

As a lifelong Zionist, my attitudes toward Israel changed at the point of its creation, but not essentially since then. Before 1948 a Zionist could consider himself free to vote on all critical issues affecting the unborn Jewish state. Afterward, voting on critical issues—especially issues of security—was a right entailing duties and responsibilities that a Diaspora Zionist did not bear and could not perform.

As for hopes of mine that were not fulfilled in Israel—perhaps it would be more correct to say possibilities not realized—these were decisions for which I, and not Israel, was responsible. My commitment to Israel, before and after its creation, was never conditional on its assuming the particular color and shape that I desired for a Jewish state.

As an active Zionist, and one identified with a Zionist party, I have of course allowed myself to comment and complain fairly freely about Israeli actions or policies, both while my own party comrades and while their opponents were in power. Sometimes this was done personally, in print or in meetings, and sometimes through voting in Zionist elections. I have always felt that the institutional frame provided not only the moral license but the necessary bounds for my kibitzing about Israeli affairs.

The recent groundswell of carping at Israel comes from a number of sources which should be clearly distinguished. There are those who opposed the creation of a Jewish state *ab initio*. Once Israel arose and gained a certain degree of international acceptance, such opposition had to be redefined in terms of a changing situation. Moreover, the Holocaust background out of which the Jewish state emerged stilled a number of such voices or compelled them to speak in a different tongue. But this was an inhibiting factor that lost force slowly over time, and that from the start affected mainly the Western members of the post-Hitler family of nations who founded the UN. Others, the Soviets and their entourage, the Arabs, and the Asian and African nations for whom the Jews and their martyrdom were morally irrelevant, were free to deal with Israeli matters strictly in accordance with a cost-benefit analysis that was virtually devoid of cost. There has consequently been a continuous tide of opposition to Israel's vital interests from such sources. I am not sure whether it has gained strength recently; it may, in fact, be ebbing. On the other hand, those inhibited by Holocaust-related moral concerns may be sensing a release from this inhibition.

However, your questions are concerned with Jewish rather than non-Jewish assailants of Israel and its policies. It does appear that the volume of such vocal assaults by Jewish critics has mounted, partly because of the passage of time, the fading of memories, and the combination of Israel's victories and its virtual defeats. Another reason is equally obvious, but suggests rather different conclusions from those you imply. Criticism of Israeli policies by Diaspora Jews (whether committed or opposed to the state in principle) has been constant from the beginning. The greater volume—though hardly a higher decibel level—is caused by the fact that the current Israeli power structure and policies, or lack of policies, run counter to the views of a larger and more influential segment of the American Jewish community than was true in earlier years.

There are those, of course, who without being hostile to the very existence of the Jewish state are aroused to speak about it, or even to notice its existence, only when it gives them cause for complaint. Nowadays not only Israel but any other significant country may be held to account by for-

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eigners because of its foreign policy, its social or political structure, or certainly its record on human rights. Such comment, which can hardly be objected to in this contracting globe, is often combined with pressures of a much less acceptable sort. The feeble instrument of international law may give some protection to states against pressures from other states; such pressures from outsiders by private organizations, whether permanent or *ad hoc*, can be legitimate only within a moral community.

ISRAEL invites comment from Diaspora Jews on more specific grounds than the general concern of men everywhere with the behavior of any state. Who is entitled to be a Jew is a matter strongly affected by Israeli law and politics, and so are many other aspects of Diaspora Jewish life. The title this gives Jews outside to concern themselves with Israeli affairs—not only in words but in action—is recognized, and also regulated, by the complex network of Jewish communal institutions. The most effective and to my mind the most legitimate connection of this sort is that provided by Zionist parties, organized in both Israel and the Diaspora. Belonging to such a party, if one takes it seriously, involves one in relations with Israelis and their concerns on matters that affect both Israel and the Diaspora. How much one may legitimately press on one or another issue is a question that constantly arises and must be dealt with by an interchange of views and on common grounds rather than by blind pressure. Zionist organizations without Israeli counterparts —including, lately, American Jewish denominational groups—must operate more or less in the same way. That such Zionists allow themselves to attack particular Israeli actions or policies is a necessary part of the responsibilities they share in a wide range of common concerns.

It will be clear that I am less pleased with those who organize pressure against Israel or its policies without such continuous involvement or commitment. This applies, in a sense, to the fundraising bureaus that constitute half of the Jewish Agency. Unlike other critics, they rarely raise political or ideological objections; their concern is a narrower one. I am not charmed by the demands to cut the pattern of social policies in Israel according to the needs and customs of American benefactors, overriding those of the Israelis themselves. But this is a minor matter. The main issue is the pressure of various American Jewish activists who concern themselves with Israel on particular questions—relations with South Africa, with the PLO, or others—but otherwise ignore both Israel and the broader Jewish community. Even when I may agree with its purpose, I find such pressure offensive if those who apply it claim a right to speak as Jews without any other history of Jewish concern.

I do not regard such expressions as dangerous, though clearly Israel, and the Jews, face special perils. Other peoples are threatened in different ways; Israel is under the pressure of a widely supported effort to deny it legitimacy and annul its existence, and Jews the world over would take such a possibility as a new Holocaust. Jewish critics of Israel who ignore this context have no right to speak as Jews. But I doubt if they are much more than a nuisance to Israel or to the Jewish community.

BEN HALPERN, *professor emeritus of Jewish history at Brandeis, is the author of* The Idea of the Jewish State *and* A Clash of Heroes: Brandeis, Weizmann, and American Zionism *(Oxford University Press), among other books.*

Mark Helprin: For more than half a century, the Jews of Palestine and, then, Israel have struggled in sequence and sometimes simultaneously against the local population, the British, organized Arab armies, arms and trade sanctions, Arab military establishments equipped by the Soviet Union, terrorism, and, when the state refused to die, the condemnation, sometimes polite and sometimes barbaric, of much of the world. While attending to the preceding list, these same Jews managed to absorb the greater part of refugees from the Holocaust and the Arab world, contribute a Jewish Brigade to the British army, and build a country.

It has been nothing short of miraculous. The miracle, however, has not extended so far as to allow the Jews who accomplished it to escape without a price, which has been exhaustion, a certain moral hardening, and the abandonment of many principles that enabled the country to be established and to grow. Fifteen years ago, as a young airman in the Israeli air force, I was in a concrete bunker when a Libyan civil airliner was shot down in the Sinai. Although the Libyans had threatened to crash a jet into an Israeli city, the plane was on its way back to the Egyptian airport that it had overshot when the Israeli air force brought it down. As I remember, about a hundred civilians died. At the instant, in the bunker, wild cheering. Who was cheering? People my age who had fought in 1967, and in the War of Attrition, who would soon fight again in Sinai in the Yom Kippur War, who had recently received the PLO's message from Munich and from like massacres in a dozen other places.

Some American Jews have heard the echoes of that cheer. Knowing what is right and what is wrong, they justifiably condemn it, though, as often as not, they are ignorant of its origins, or choose to overlook them, or do not care. Others have been deaf to it, or would like to pretend that it doesn't exist. In seeking to promote Israel's

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chances of survival, they choose to overlook the imperfections that trouble some Jews the most.

Jews who labor within the great luxury of American political conditions, where it appears, at least, that destructive discord is often a step toward healthy reconstruction, place their frequently mistaken assumptions regarding the American case into the Israeli vessel, which is far too fragile to support them. The result is a threat of no small consequence. Half in response, and half to freeze time, others deny or suppress criticism, and thus we have the worst of both worlds—critical dissent untempered by historical understanding or, sometimes, even good will, and slavish loyalty to a mythical, impossible state. Though some are guilty of following an illusion, others are guilty of having thrown down one enchantment and immediately entering upon another.

American Jewish organizational leaders are partly responsible for this unfortunate dichotomy, for they have persistently failed to recognize that were they receptive to constructive dissent it would take the high ground and hold all the attention otherwise afforded to bilious attacks. Some years ago, after the Sabra and Shatila massacres, I wrote in the New York *Times* condemning, without reservation, Israel's role in them, and affirming, without reservation, Israel's right to a strong self-defense (including its unassailable right to hot pursuit in Lebanon). Israel's habitually militant critics had seized upon the first to undermine the second, while some of its defenders, also mistakenly linking the two, were put in the embarrassing position of attempting to excuse the inexcusable. The dominant impulse of the American Jewish leadership was to evade rather than to confront facts. I was portrayed by enemies of Israel as a Zionist apologist and by Zionist apologists as an enemy of Israel. Had the Jewish leadership done in the first instance what it had left for me to attempt virtually alone, then right and deserved criticism would have been directed at right and deserved targets, and pathological criticism, at least among Jews, might have withered. But it did not. All the wrong causes were addressed.

PERHAPS because they deal less with Israel itself than with images and dreams, American Jews have lagged behind the Israelis in political maturation. I cannot imagine that this country's Jewish leadership, were it entrusted with governing Israel, would be sufficiently agile or sober to empower, for example, something like the Agranat Commission, which investigated the lack of preparedness in the Yom Kippur War, or to deal firmly with the excesses of the prison system or the Shin Bet. It takes a kind of fundamental courage not to skate sideways from the truth, the kind that you can develop, for example, in pushing armored columns across inhospitable desert at great risk. This the Israelis have done. In contrast, the American Jewish leadership is top-heavy with résumé-builders and apple-polishers. They are the source of much embarrassing silence. The embarrassing chatter, on the other hand, comes from a faction which, though apparently immune to credentialism, is no less caught up in dreams.

Whereas American Jews are, in the main, liberal, the government of Israel has been either "conservative" or a coalition given its direction and limitations by conservatives. Liberals tend to look upon external threats with unusual equanimity, and have little reservation about entering internal quarrels. Indeed, they tend to believe that the synthesis of such dialectics is always benevolent, that greater benefit follows greater trauma as the day follows the night. For them, it is more important to go on record against the principles of "reaction" than it is to look to the practical effects their assertions have upon the strength of a nation. Although in the case of Israel their obliviousness of the external danger comes not from sympathy with the Arab position, in the American case it comes from sympathy with the tenets of world socialism, and these habits are hard to break.

Thus, for a liberal American Jew, criticizing Israel affords both the satisfaction of conforming to liberal credos by denouncing what he may believe are the fruits of reaction, and the illusion that by doing so he is actually strengthening Israel. Faith in criticism itself, like faith in "change," or faith in any abstract principle, unadjusted, leads the believer in such things to attack himself, his country, or his people, for he knows them best, and he knows that none is as perfect as a principle.

MY ANALYSIS and, therefore, my conclusions are simple. One must, without flinching or fear of the truth, put one's house in order. At the same time, that house must be braced to stand against its enemies. Neither can be done well without the other. In the polarized debate upon this question, neither side is entirely right and neither is entirely wrong, though by mutual opposition each steadily becomes wronger and wronger. One must put one's house in order not merely for the moral frisson, but also as a means of strengthening its defenses. This ensures that self-criticism does not become self-wounding. And strengthening one's defenses is not merely an exercise in caution and compulsiveness, but a means to ensure that one is not forced by weakness and expediency to abandon one's moral principles. For every new tank brigade, an Agranat Commission; for every Agranat Commission, a new tank brigade.

MARK HELPRIN *is the author of two short-story collections,* A Dove of the East *and* Ellis Island, *and two novels,* Winter's Tale *and* Refiner's Fire. *He served in the Israeli infantry and air force in 1972 and 1973.*

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Nat Hentoff: I have believed in the necessity of a Jewish state since the Holocaust. That belief has not changed. Even if anti-Semitism were not as far-flung, and often deep-rooted, as it is, the very least that can be done in the memory of the millions killed because they were Jews is to assure the survival of a land of return for those who are still in peril or in internal exile where they now are.

It is because the future of Israel as a *Jewish* state is increasingly endangered from within, as well as from outside, that over the years I have become more and more critical of the leadership, Likud and Labor, in Israel.

Apart from ideology and polemics, the objective facts—"facts on the ground," as Ariel Sharon might say—are quite clear as to the choices ahead for Israel. If the occupied territories remain occupied, at some point early in the next century there will be as many Arabs in Israel and in the occupied territories as Jews. It's a matter of the birth rate. And while many of the settlers in particular are nurturing large families, the numbers just aren't there to equal the Arab rate. *Aliyah* is not, to say the least, a significant factor in these demographics.

Accordingly, Israel—if it keeps the territories—will have several choices. If it annexes the territories and then permits the Palestinians to vote, Israel will have become a binational state.

Or, Israel can deny the vote to most of the burgeoning Arab population. It will then no longer be rhetorical to equate Israel, in some dismaying ways—dismaying to Jews inside as well as outside the country—with South Africa. Or, Israel can keep things as they are, and that is like making two scorpions in a bottle a national emblem.

Or, Israel can decide to leave the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. It will hardly be a simple withdrawal, both in terms of the settlers and of large, furious sections of Israeli public opinion. Even more Israelis will be concerned about the dangers of having a Palestinian state so close—whether or not the state is confederated with Jordan.

But the closeness is also an advantage with regard to defense. Given the skills, let alone the seasoned skepticism, of Israeli security forces, it will be exceedingly difficult to conceal weaponry of any consequence in this new state. I am taking it for granted that a condition for the creation of such an entity will be its guarantee that it will be without arms. I am also taking for granted that such a pledge cannot at all be depended on. But Israel's security can be safeguarded even if—especially if—the Palestinian state is right next to it.

There is no movement, however, toward this way of assuring that Israel will keep on being a Jewish state. To be sure, isolated Israelis (including a few from the Likud) and isolated Palestinians draw up scenarios of separation, but the Likud is adamantly opposed and Shimon Peres expects that King Hussein will be the messiah—the most false of all.

The way things are not going, the way young Israelis appear to be becoming even more implacable about not giving up territory than many of their elders, further puts the Jewish nature of a future Israel in question.

ON MATTERS other than its very survival as a Jewish land, Israel has fulfilled many of my hopes for it. For instance, I have seldom found more vigorous, ceaseless, and challenging exchanges of ideas than in Israel. Certainly there is much more of this in Jerusalem than, in my experience, in New York City.

I also had hoped that Israel could have evolved, in its attitude toward the Arabs, more along the lines of Martin Buber and the earliest pioneers and, for that matter, Moshe Dayan on some days. On the other hand, the PLO has hardly made that approach persuasive. Yet while the fears that generate the racism in the schools, for instance, are clear, there is another fear of what kinds of citizens of Israel these new Jews will grow up to be. There has been some effort to go into the schools and remind the students of what stereotyping can lead to, but unless such efforts become more successful, there may well be race wars in the Jewish state. And no matter what happens to the territories, what kind of Jewish state will that be?

Given the all too obvious fact that not all criticism is useful, or intended as such, the upsurge of American Jewish criticism of Israel has been largely to the good. And therefore, largely healthy.

The invasion of Lebanon, for instance, was a disaster—for Israel: the number of dead; the weakening of morale—for the first time—in the armed forces; and the bitterness of the division within the country. Yet during that invasion, nearly all American Jewish organizations, and their leaders, either supported what was going on or were silent, despite grave misgivings by some. That is not likely to happen again if and when Israel manufactures that kind of war. And indeed, the growing degree of American Jewish criticism of Israel is quite probably going to be a deterrent to such self-destructive recklessness.

Nor do I believe the rising criticism is dangerous, even when that criticism may be plain dumb. Lord knows, there is no political monolith there, and all criticism from all sources is weighed, and sometimes assaulted, from many different perspectives.

What does this increasing criticism portend? If it begins to focus on how to keep Israel a Jewish state, it may portend a Jewish Israel, against present odds.

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Gertrude Himmelfarb: "The normalization of the Jews"—what pleasing images that phrase once evoked: Jews at ease with themselves, not fearful or defensive or self-denying; Jews engaged in all those activities (chicken-raising or land-tilling or country-club-bing) which, for one reason or another, had been alien to them; Jews regarded as individuals rather than as stereotypes. The state of Israel was to have brought about that agreeable condition, for Jews in and out of Israel. Don't wish too hard for anything lest it come true. Today "normalization" has come to mean prostitutes in Tel Aviv and sabra gangsters in Los Angeles, corrupt Israeli officials and self-seeking politicians, an economy in crisis and a foreign policy in disarray.

It has also come to mean a recrudescence of that exacerbated self-consciousness and guilt-ridden conscience that have plagued the Jews of the Diaspora since the Enlightenment, when we discovered that if we could not be indistinguishable from everyone else, we should at least be better than everyone else. How often have we heard it said—by Jews, rarely by non-Jews—that we must hold ourselves to a "higher standard," that we must not be parochial, that we must cherish the rights of other minorities as much as, indeed more than, our own rights? Others may properly invoke the principle of self-interest; we can invoke nothing less than the universal interest of mankind. "Is it good for the Jews?"—with what contempt that simple (innocent, some might say) question is greeted by sophisticated, high-minded Jews.

Americans in general, especially sophisticated and high-minded Americans, have a tendency to be moralistic about matters (such as foreign policy) that do not fall comfortably within the domain of morality. And American Jews have that characteristic in double measure. We are quick to criticize the American government when it deviates from the straight and narrow, and quicker still to criticize the Israeli government. Israel, even more than America, must be a "light unto the nations." And American Jews see it as their painful task to make sure that Israel fulfills that high purpose.

Moreover, that mission, it is assumed, can only be discharged openly and candidly. It is not enough to chastise the Israeli government privately, within the Jewish community or in confidential discourse with Israelis. That would be the easy way, the coward's way. Morality must not only be served; it must be seen to be served. Anything less would be an abnegation of responsibility—of responsibility to ourselves as well as to the world. Our moral character, it appears, as much as Israel's, is at stake.

MORALISTS suffer from a kind of professional deformation: they tend to judge moral issues in terms of their own moral reputation—to be more solicitous of their own integrity, and even more of their respectability, than of the cause they are advocating. Much of the criticism of Israel is of this self-regarding nature, serving no useful purpose except to establish the moral credentials of the critics.

This is of no great consequence when the criticism concerns the internal affairs of Israel: the state of the economy, or the role of religion, or the conflict of parties. But it becomes serious when it impinges on issues that affect the very existence of Israel: military operations, diplomatic negotiations, relations with Arab states, the treatment of terrorists, the status of the West Bank. These are grave and complicated matters to which Israelis, whose lives are at stake, have given much thought and debated at great length. American Jews can pretend to no more understanding, experience, or insight than they. Nor can it be argued that Israelis are inhibited in speaking on such matters; no one has ever accused them of lacking the talent or will for controversy. Everything we have said or can say they have said better, with more knowledge and far more authority.

What American Jews can speak about with knowledge and authority are American national interests, and it is entirely proper for us to criticize Israel from this point of view. What is presumptuous is criticism that professes to address Israeli interests, and that, moreover, claims to do so with some special moral authority—as if contributing to the UJA, or belonging to Hadassah, or simply identifying oneself as a Jew, gives one the right, indeed the duty, to speak out on the most sensitive and difficult issues. It seems to me that the paramount right and duty of the American Jews is precisely not to speak out on such issues, to exercise a discretion and reserve proper to our position. The Law of Return guarantees to every Jew a place in Israel; as Norman Podhoretz has pointed out, if we choose not to avail ourselves of that opportunity, we forfeit the moral right to pass public judgment on matters which for Israelis—but not for us—are questions of life and death.

There are more practical, perhaps more urgent, reasons for reticence: the familiar plea, for example, about not giving aid and comfort to the enemy. Like "Is it good for the Jews?," this argument is regarded as vulgar and paranoid—as if there were not real enemies out there who are only too willing to exploit disaffection within the American Jewish community. But even if this were not so, even if there were no real and present danger, the moral case for prudence is still compelling.

Am I the only one who is offended by the sight of American professors spending a few weeks (or in rare cases the whole) of their hard-earned four-month vacation in Israel, generally at the expense of the Israeli government (or an Israeli university, which comes to the same thing), and returning to America to denounce as immoral Israeli

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policies in Lebanon or the West Bank—and to do so with all the confidence of first-hand experience and from the comfortable retreat of their studies? Am I wrong to see this as an egregious case of moral arrogance and obtuseness?

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Milton Himmelfarb: Have my attitudes changed?

As I have grown older I have grown more thankful: for my wife and children, for health, for Jacob's "bread to eat and clothing to wear," for America, for Israel.

My gratitude for Israel stops short of a piety that allows even some members of the Israeli parliament itself to keep their sons—no need to mention daughters—sheltered from military service, and a secularism that, nearly 120 years after Baudelaire, allows a poet-professor who has translated Greek tragedy into Hebrew to show the superiority of Hellenism over Hebraism and to continue *épater*-ing *le bourgeois* by writing: "No reason why a restaurant's menu shouldn't offer fried baby" and "So I muffed the chance to put my father into the pot of Sabbath stew."

Let an outsider explain what Jews owe Israel. Toward the end of Paul Johnson's *A History of the Jews* (1987) he writes:

> The building of Israel was the 20th-century equivalent of rebuilding the Temple. Like the Temple under Herod the Great, it had unsatisfactory aspects. But it was there. The very fact that it existed, and could be visited and shared, gave new dimensions to the Diaspora. It was a constant source of concern, sometimes of anxiety, often of pride. Once Israel had been established and proved it could defend and justify itself, no member of the Diaspora ever had to feel ashamed of being a Jew again.

The last clause refers to Jewish self-hate, as in Johnson's sketch of Walter Lippmann.

Israel is making Jewish self-hate obsolete, everywhere, in the most varied circumstances. In the United States, France, Italy, the Soviet Union—the Soviet Union!—Jews display a self-acceptance unprecedented since we first began to look at ourselves through the eyes of the Other, say two centuries ago. What these diverse and dispersed communities have in common is not American pluralism, it is Israel.

HAS Israel fulfilled or disappointed hopes?

If we cannot sustain our exaltation at Jerusalem reunited in 1967 and the Entebbe rescue on the Fourth of July, 1976, neither need we act the ingrate, who asks, "What have you done for me lately?"

The "Jewish problem" that an independent state in the land of Israel was supposed to solve was of two kinds, the problem of the Jews and the problem of Judaism/Jewishness. As to the first, at the very least there now is a country that will take in Jews who have to go there. If only it had existed in the days of the Third Reich!

The problem of Judaism/Jewishness was the one that troubled Ahad Ha'am. He thought the problem would be solved by substituting for the old, moribund Jewish religion a new, vital Hebrew culture. It has not worked out that way. Jewish religion is more alive than all the secularist Jewish ideologies, including Ahad Ha'am's. The poetry of that patricidal cannibal *manqué* is not going to replace the prayer book. Israeli secularists are likelier than the more traditionalist to abandon not only Judaism but also Israel.

Hebrew Union College's school in Jerusalem has provided American Reform with rabbis more learned than most of their predecessors two and three generations ago, when it was said, unkindly, that Reform had social-justice rabbis, and then there were the rabbis who knew Hebrew. (Israel also helps to educate our Orthodox and Conservative rabbinical students.) More generally, Israel has let many modern Jews feel religious emotion again.

THE upsurge of criticism?

Let us not be mealy-mouthed. What is at issue is disaffection.

Or call it distance. It goes with the succession of the generations. Though American Jews on average are older than other Americans, by now most of us cannot remember a time when there was no state of Israel. Only today's gray heads were present at the creation, and only for them can it still partake of the miraculous. Besides, Israelis and American Jews are ancestrally less alike than they used to be. In the past, both mostly had grandparents who spoke Yiddish. The grandparents of most Israelis today spoke Arabic.

There is more, and worse. I was once invited to speak at a synagogue that is near a major university and prides itself on the professors and graduate students it attracts. Among the subjects proposed was "Israel as Task." Task? They knew that the word connotes difficult or arduous work. Afterward I heard about another congregation, near another major university. Looking for a new rabbi, they turned down one candidate because he had worked for what Washington calls the Israel lobby.

To such people what is wrong with Israel is not that it is too unlike America but that it is too like. America strong-arms the weak and downtrodden, they say, and so does Israel. America

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elects conservative presidents, and in the past decade Israel has presumed to elect conservative prime ministers. In a graduate school of journalism, the students—not all Jewish, of course—have given Castro a higher popularity rating than Reagan. How would the Jews among them rate Arafat and Shamir?

Gratitude is ruled out. In 1964 Jews voted against Goldwater 9 to 1. Not very conservative, one would think, but before the election a social scientist had become alarmed by what was revealed to him as conservative trends in the Jewish community. Shrewdly putting the blame for such wickedness on our yielding to the temptation of thankfulness, he lectured us on resisting that temptation: "No one should feel the need to be thankful for having available to him whatever one may reasonably expect as a normal right in a decent society." Anne Frank would then have been all of thirty-five, if she had survived.

As a good radical this man had opposed American entry into World War II, which is to say that he had opposed a necessary condition for the defeat of Hitler. America saved him in spite of himself and made available to him opportunities he could not have reasonably expected, having always denied that America was a decent society. He was and is a professor in yet a third major university. On occasion he still lectures us.

He taught ingratitude to America. If he had turned his attention to Israel, he would correspondingly have had to say something like this: since in a decent society there would have been neither anti-Semitism nor Jewish self-hate, which is merely the anti-Semitism of Jews, no Jew should feel the need to thank Israel for having lifted that curse from us.

The Passover Haggadah tells us that in every generation our enemies attack us in order to put an end to us, but the Holy One, blessed be He, saves us from them. May He also save us from ourselves.

MILTON HIMMELFARB, *who was until recently an editor of the* American Jewish Year Book, *is the author of* The Jews of Modernity.

Erich Isaac: If Israel has failed to fulfill the hopes of a vocal segment of American (and other Western) Jewries, it is because these hopes derived from ideals and values detached not merely from Middle Eastern realities, but also from traditional Jewish perspectives.

Many of these Jews envisioned Israel as a secular Western utopia. It was to be a state in which high culture flourished, one whose glorious literary, scientific, and technological achievements were universally admired. Its social institutions would be of such inventiveness and perfection as to serve as touchstones for the civilized world. Interestingly, even Jewish businessmen with no sympathy for socialism as applied to the U.S. economy felt that justice and equity were bound up with socialist solutions in Israel, the Israeli kibbutz arousing virtually universal pride among American Jews. Needless to say, Israel's international relations would be marked by a universal amity. The spiritual life of its citizens (religion, of course, being separated from the state) would provide a vague if important underpinning for the society's lofty ethical culture.

FOR some Jews, Israel possesses legitimacy only to the extent that it approximates their secularized messianic vision for it. But Middle Eastern realities force Israel into the dirty business of war, counterterrorism, and rule over hostile minorities, make it arms-maker and arms-seller, often to countries which are the target of liberal opprobrium. Increasingly, liberal Jews, i.e., the majority of Jewish leadership, have felt aggrieved by an Israel that, as they see it, has let them down badly. For in the liberal, or, in some cases, "progressive" circles in which they move, Israel, instead of serving as a glamorous and noble extension of the Jewish image they wish to project, has become an embarrassment.

That Israel should let them down has been all the more upsetting because the state once possessed progressive cachet. In 1947 and 1948, the military exploits of the fledgling Jewish state were much admired. After all, even the Soviet Union approved and Czechoslovakia provided critical supplies during the Western arms embargo.

The very fact that Israel, against all expectations, did so well on the battlefield may have reinforced the feeling of Israel's Diaspora supporters that the state could also readily accomplish the social, cultural, and political goals they had set for it. When inevitably Israel could not do so, and when the tide of opinion within liberal non-Jewish reference groups (in churches, the academy, the media) shifted against Israel, with the PLO now defined not merely as the underdog but progressive, many of Israel's erstwhile Jewish supporters felt they had been left out on a limb. They saw no way to defend what their allies in their various other progressive causes condemned. Arms to Somoza, for heaven's sake! Trade with South Africa! It almost seemed as if Israel were engaged in a deliberate conspiracy to discomfit them. For the most left-wing among them, Israel's flaws loomed large indeed: the state was imperialist and colonialist, nay, racist and fascist.

All this leads to a not uncommon pattern of rationalization. It is not they, say Israel's one-time supporters, but Israel that has changed, "lost its soul." Yet most of them still see themselves as committed to Israel's survival. However, since Israel has fallen short of its stipulated utopian performance, their commitment has become not mere-

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ly "critical" but conditional, that is, conditional on their playing a decisive role in Israel's domestic and foreign policy, i.e., what is called "a true partnership." Thus we find the intrusion of American Jewish interests into Israeli decision-making processes, with the American Jewish Congress's call for an international peace conference promptly being echoed by other influential Jewish organizations.

IN HOLDING Israel to perfectionist standards, secularized Jews come into conflict with what is fundamental to Judaism—its national-religious attachment to the land of Israel. The vision of a perfect society (leaving aside for the moment its historical roots in Jewish messianic conceptions) is universal. But the requirements of statehood inevitably interfere with the abstract model-building such visions encourage. Thus it is not surprising that among an important segment of the leadership of organized Jewry there is a new emphasis on the role of the Diaspora as co-equal with, if not superior to, Israel as a Jewish option. It is precisely the Diaspora's lack of power that makes it seem morally attractive to many Jews. As the Israeli philosopher Jochanan Bloch has put it: "What [the Jews] always wanted for themselves was to avoid the rough and tumble, the wretchedness and glory, of political life, and to reject sovereignty with its inextricable component of awfulness. . . . [I]n their hearts is the burning belief, which is also the arrogant presumption, that they are entitled to a morally better existence. . . ."

Ironically, to the extent that Jewish values are superficially invoked, it is to use them against Israel. A sizable contingent of Reform and Conservative rabbis develops its moral muscle by flagellating Israel. These rabbis cast themselves as modern exemplars of Judaism's prophetic tradition, ignoring, even as they exemplify, the talmudic dictum that after the destruction of the Second Temple prophecy ceased, and the empty pretense is continued only by fools and children.

Biblical prophecy, which was rooted in the love of the Jewish people, its law and land, is denatured by these rabbis, and indeed becomes almost indistinguishable from the "prophetic morality" purveyed in the resolutions of organizations like the National Council of Churches. The leaders of the denominational bureaucracies composing that organization also regularly invoke so-called prophetic values in condemning American "imperialism."

A CRITICAL stance shades into an openly adversarial one and erstwhile Jewish supporters internalize large portions of the anti-Israel case. They are particularly vulnerable to those who speak the language of problem-solving and conflict resolution, and come forward with comprehensive strategies for peace. To Jews these possess a seductive magic and their allure becomes well-nigh irresistible when agendas of social and global transformation are presented as Jewish imperatives.

What we have here is a Jewish messianism which does not recognize itself. These are the Jews who are accustomed to using messianism as a scornful epithet for those who invoke historical and religious claims to settle in places like Shiloh, Beth El, and Hebron. But while many settlers in Judea and Samaria believe their return to these areas sets the stage for an eventual messianic era, they are no less driven by a tough-minded appreciation of their country's geostrategic vulnerability and the nature of the enemies they confront. The secularized utopians here are captives of illusions of perfectibility that have veiled, even as they have produced, some of the great killing grounds of the 20th century.

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Rael Jean Isaac: To me, the changed attitude toward Israel is typified by the Jewish community's very different response, ten years apart, to two Jewish organizations that publicly attack Israel: Breira in 1977 and New Jewish Agenda today. New Jewish Agenda has gone much farther than Breira, cooperating in activities with the American pro-PLO network. Since I wrote pamphlets (in each case published by Americans for a Safe Israel) on both organizations, I am perhaps specially situated to comment on this phenomenon.

When my pamphlet on Breira was published in 1977 it was only one of a series of "exposés" being published in places as diverse as the Hadassah newsletter, the New York *Jewish Week*, and COMMENTARY. In the wake of the storm of criticism from the mainstream of the Jewish community, Breira folded. No similar outcry has attended New Jewish Agenda.

To be sure, it has been easier for Jewish organizations to look the other way in the case of Agenda than it was with Breira. Unlike Breira, Agenda in its first years maintained a low profile. Also it concentrated initially on building bridges to the pro-Arab network rather than on establishing itself within the Jewish community. For these reasons Agenda did not attract the attention Breira had drawn in places like the New York *Times*, making it relatively easy for mainstream Jewish organizations to avoid taking a stand on it.

But by 1987, Agenda had shifted its focus to the Jewish community and was thus harder to ignore. It had been accepted as a member of Jewish community-relations councils in a number of cities; persuaded a wide range of national and local Jewish organizations to join it in sponsoring lectures, conferences, and assorted events; taken the

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lead in promoting the sanctuary movement within the Jewish community; and, by sending a hand-picked delegation to Nicaragua, whose findings were widely publicized in major newspapers, had defused the charge of Sandinista anti-Semitism (the validity of the charge has been documented in "Sandinista Anti-Semitism and Its Apologists," by Joshua Muravchik, Susan Alberts, and Antony Korenstein, COMMENTARY, September 1986). It had even moved into Zionist politics, aligning itself with Americans for a Progressive Israel to participate in the World Zionist Congress elections of 1987.

Nonetheless, when my pamphlet exposing New Jewish Agenda's activities was published in the spring of 1987, to my knowledge, with the single exception of the California Jewish paper *Heritage*, the Jewish press was as critical of the attack on Agenda as it was of the activities that provoked it. The Washington D.C. *Jewish Week* published an upbeat five-page spread on the organization (there was even information on how to join the local chapter). The New York *Jewish Week*, which had been in the forefront in assailing Breira, now openly regretted the role it had taken under its former owner and editor Philip Hochstein. Its article on New Jewish Agenda focused on the organization's serving as a "bridge" between the Jewish community and the Left.

The reaction of Jewish organizations was equally instructive. While several had helped to distribute the pamphlet on Breira, none was interested in the pamphlet on Agenda. The writer of the article on Agenda in New York's *Jewish Week* reported that he asked Jewish organizational officials "in the center" to give their views on New Jewish Agenda. Although this was at a time (September 1987) when many Jewish organizations were rushing to denounce Judge Bork's Supreme Court candidacy, on a subject appropriate to their ostensible concerns they had nothing to say. The *Jewish Week*'s writer reported his surprise that the only official from whom he could elicit any comment was from the Anti-Defamation League (the ADL did not think Agenda "speaks for the entire American Jewish community").

WHAT had happened in the space of ten years? For one thing, Breira had left a legacy. Its very existence dissipated the sense of shock within the Jewish community that previously attended the appearance of an organization of Jews engaged in public attacks upon Israel. Also, Breira had attracted a substantial group of young rabbinically trained Jews who sought positions in Jewish communal organizations partly because they were scornful of the congregational rabbinate and partly because they saw these organizations as having become centers of greater power and influence in Jewish life. Their views were the clichés of the 1960's, with America seen as imperialist oppressor and Israel as its handmaiden in the Middle East. Ensconced in Jewish organizations and federations, they were prepared to accept Israel—if it transformed its society and policies to accord with their "values."

The failure to challenge New Jewish Agenda, then, is partly explained by the influence of strategically placed elites in substantial sympathy with its perspective on Israel. But equally important is the transvaluation of liberalism in the larger society, and the apparent determination of the majority of the Jewish community to remain in the liberal camp even if the policies pursued are antithetical to traditional liberalism. To take only the most obvious example, Jewish organizations, in the name of liberal values, once uniformly and vigorously fought quota systems. Today, in the name of liberal values, a number of Jewish organizations endorse them. This is a perverse tribute to the success of the original struggle, which has produced a generation of Jews so secure that they do not even recognize the dangers to their community, and indeed to the larger society, in such a system.

For much of that powerful segment of the Jewish community that identifies itself as liberal, priorities have changed. Israel's fortunes have taken second place to what have become for many American Jews more burning issues of the day, like abortion rights, school prayer, disarmament, and U.S. disengagement from Central America. It is significant that the articles in the Jewish press on New Jewish Agenda did not exonerate the organization of the charges of anti-Israel activity. Their import was rather that such actions had to be balanced against Agenda's professed noble mission of "*tikkun olam*," perfecting the world. The anti-Israel activism of Agenda members weighs lightly in an evaluation that sees it as just another manifestation of high-mindedness. Indeed there is a tendency for Jewish community leaders to congratulate themselves on having brought forth "such fine and socially committed young people."

Support within the Jewish community for the policies pressed by New Jewish Agenda and a host of "progressive" organizations has been tempered by concern for their impact upon Israel. Perhaps the major danger Agenda presents is in encouraging Jews to believe that the preservation of an imperfect state of Israel is not an end for which it is worth sacrificing the pursuit of millennial dreams.

RAEL JEAN ISAAC *is the author of* Israel Divided (*Johns Hopkins*) *and* Parties and Politics of Israel (*Longman*).

H. J. Kaplan: The premises you set forth are grim, to say the least, and so much at variance with my own sense of the situation that I must wonder whether you are not

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projecting the views of a small number of professional activists, which normally means a disproportionately large number of utopians, prigs, and nudniks, onto the American Jewish community as a whole. The latter, in my admittedly limited experience of it, strikes me as more complacent than critical at this moment, and too easily inclined to assume that the safety of Israel is henceforth, or at least for the foreseeable future, assured. Such an attitude would in fact account in some measure for the willingness of an increasing number of Jews who have repeatedly demonstrated their loyalty in the past "to criticize Israel's policies and even Israel itself," as the symposium statement puts it, but it also suggests (to me) that this would change if the existence of the Jewish state were again perceived, as in 1967 and 1973, to be seriously endangered.

At which time, I can hear you saying, a great deal of damage may have been done. Agreed. Criticism can also be helpful, as COMMENTARY often attests, but your concern presumably goes to something deeper than our approval or disapproval of this or that Israeli policy or party; and with this in mind I propose to answer your questions as directly and personally as they are put.

I feel closer to Israel, naturally enough, for having spent some time and acquired some friends there, but my own attitudes have not essentially changed. And, since these are in no sense remarkable or different from those of the majority of American Jews, we now have a common enterprise, a project, to bind us together; which is what we needed, precisely, if the Diaspora itself were not to disappear.

For the rest, we need agree on little else at the outset. It pleases me, for example, to think that providence had a hand in the creation of Israel and what happened thereafter; but if some of my children, friends, and relatives believe otherwise, that is all right with me. Obviously, we have all reacted and will continue to react in various ways to Israeli institutions and policies, but the enterprise or project to which I refer remains. We call it solidarity—a blanket word. It covers a spectrum of feelings and ideas. But we all know what it means.

Our commitment to Israel is rooted not in our opinions and perceptions, which *have* changed over the years, but rather in our situation as Jews; and this is true, it seems to me, whether the latter is understood to derive from modern history or from the covenant or both; or even, for that matter, if it is not understood at all but merely felt and asserted: we are a people, this special people, and we intend to survive.

So it's kinship I'm talking about—our peculiar kind. In my youth, as we emerged from the warm but confining atmosphere of our immigrant families, this was not a respectable idea. Indeed, it was rejected by most of my contemporaries, including myself, as tribal and crude. I embraced it gratefully when Israel was born, and it has informed my attitudes—and not only toward Israel—ever since. This, after all, is what matters most to us when we are young: to learn how to become what we are; and then, later, when we are older, not to forget.

In 1948 I was in Beirut, as it happens, on a diplomatic mission, lunching with Takhieddine, a Druse, the minister of war. Relaxed and merry, since the Lebanese were uninvolved in the unpleasantness south of their border, he got a little drunk and proposed that we take the car and drive over the mountain. *Filons sur Damas!* I thanked him and told him that I had too much to do that afternoon. But what I had in mind, of course, was that a member of Ben-Gurion's cabinet bore my surname, and that the Syrians were likely to shoot me or throw me in jail.

Recounting this story to my children, which I probably do too often, I bid them welcome to the contradictions of the Diaspora. We like to think we are free, and we are. But we are also chosen.

SO WE DO NOT give our support to Israel as a reward for its good behavior, but simply because we are Jews, and all answerable to God together. Happily, the Israelis have built a civil society; they have been decent and effective in the ingathering of the exiles, valorous and skillful in war; and no more incoherent in their economic and social policies than democracies usually are. But what if all this were not the case? Then we would still support them, however critically, because our fate as a people is bound up with theirs.

None of this is meant to deny the importance of the issues that agitate the Israelis and sometimes embitter their dialogue with us. Certain of these, the problem of the territories, for example, or the role of the rabbis, raise the most fateful questions. The fact remains that we must begin by distinguishing between the critics who share our tribal feelings, or at least wish us well, and those who do not. *A priori*, this settles nothing, since the road to hell is still paved with good intentions, but in politics as in war it is necessary to know where people are coming from and what weapons they have in their hands.

Having grown up without a Jewish education, untouched by Zionism, and (even before World War II) too disillusioned with socialism to share the nascent kibbutz-chic, I saw Israel as a sanctuary for the survivors, essentially, and little more. What actually happened was a divine surprise—not only for me but for the Zionists, the utopians, the religious, and everyone else. To be sure, the messiah has not come, Israel is beset with grave and intractable problems, but to speak of disappointment under the circumstances strikes me as malevolent or impious or both.

THE UPSURGE of criticism is largely related, in my opinion, to the deplorable confusion and self-

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hatred that have, for reasons too complicated to analyze here, so sickened the American body politic since the Vietnam war. We Jews of the Diaspora tend, notoriously, to be "like other people, only more so," here as elsewhere. We live, moreover, in close symbiosis with Israel. So the extraordinary mindlessness and moral idiocy that have overcome the American Left do indeed pose a serious threat—to the Jewish state by a sort of contagion and, more importantly, by weakening America's defenses and its position in the world.

But where is it written that American Jews must always, whatever the consequences, be "like other people, only more so"? Our most obvious interest this time is to be "less so," before it is too late.

H. J. KAPLAN *spent twenty-five years in the Foreign Service. His most recent article in* COMMENTARY, *"Remembering Vietnam," appeared in December 1987.*

Roger Kaplan: I'd have to say my views on Israel haven't much changed since 1967 when I volunteered (unsuccessfully) to be of use to the Jewish state. Before then I had a somewhat fuzzy *Exodus* idea of Israel; afterward I became more serious: destruction is possible, sentimental gestures alone won't prevent it, we have to be prepared to contribute what we can. What did change was my idea of the enemy.

It took me some time to think this through, but my instincts in the aftermath of the Six-Day War were sure enough. What's happened, though, is that little by little the attitude of Israel's enemies has become the conventional wisdom of individuals who do not think of themselves as enemies.

Nowadays Israel, not only the only democracy in the Middle East, as is often said, but the only social democracy, is attacked and reviled as if it had faults more virulent and repugnant than the cruel, vicious tyrannies that surround it.

But it so happens that Israel is the consequence of the only successful national-liberation movement in the 20th century. I mean, it is the only national-liberation movement that did not end up in variations on the experience of Uganda or Indochina. National liberation is the cover for mass murder in Cambodia, for human-wave warfare in Iran, for totalitarian gangsterism in our own hemisphere.

Why, after all this, they blame the Jews, you tell me. Note, however, that with bad ideas as with bad manners, usually one thing leads to another. So you get it on the brain that Israel is supporting racist Dutchmen in South Africa and the next thing you know it follows that Israel must be the cat's-paw of imperialism in the Middle East. When the Israel Defense Forces arrive at the outskirts of Beirut in pursuit of the PLO which had been terrorizing that city's citizens, it comes out in the translation that we're seeing the Warsaw Ghetto uprising all over again, but with the PLO as the Jews.

I've noticed that there's not much you can do about this kind of thinking. So if you ask me whether it's gotten worse and do I worry about it, I say of course it's unhealthy and of course it's bloody dangerous, but looking at it with the long view it isn't necessarily any worse than it has ever been. Our civilization produces this sort of attitude, along with much else. We've been this way a long time, we've partaken of our liberal civilization's insanely tolerant attitude toward the evil that lurks in the other—the regime that does not belong to the liberal democracies' club, the individual who has not accepted our morality. And I think we are going to stay this way for a while; it's the way things have been set up.

ISRAEL and the Israelis have gotten more admirable the more I've gotten to know their history. To the *Exodus* type of romance—and by the way, in its essentials the novel was no exaggeration—and to what small measure of religious motivation I may have, I added in years of polemics a deep intellectual respect for a nation and a society able to stand up militarily and politically against aggression. When you think about it, this was one of the main hopes vested in Zionism, the ability to resist. Israel must live because the Jewish people must live and I think most Jews, even those who hold their noses when speaking of the Likud, agree with Raymond Aron's remark that if Israel were destroyed he would lose his will to live. But this hope for life did not and does not imply that Israel should be solely a refuge for battered Jews; it has also had to be a place that would resist battering. The destruction of the Iraqi nuclear reactor was as necessary as the hunting down of the Munich killers and the rescue at Entebbe. Israel is a success: by any comparative yardstick a prosperous democracy. I don't see how you can speak of disappointment, though of course there are those who do.

To the degree that conventional wisdom among our elites remains obsessed with the idea that it's not okay for liberal democracies to fight and fight and fight in their own defense, Israel will to some extent be isolated and persecuted politically. Israel doesn't have the luxury of being able to do things by halves. So opinion, whether orchestrated by the barbarian states (it's worth recalling that the Zionism-is-racism resolution was masterminded by the Soviets), or generated within the liberal democracies, comes down hard. News coverage often will be unfair, but in free societies you can't hold on to your market, political or economic, by being wrong all the time. So, although the news often sounds awful, you can to some degree count on self-correcting pressures.

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I could go on, but I'll close with this observation on the false issue of dual loyalty. What we are in is the war of liberal civilization against barbarism. Whether I want to be an Israeli or an American is my business, but we are all in the battle against barbarism together. I think that, with due respect to correct etiquette, we all have a duty to criticize one another transnationally when any of us lets down our side in this battle. You would think a civilized community made up of Americans and Britons and Israelis and Frenchmen and Italians would know by definition what those rules of etiquette are, but that it does not is a symptom of what we are talking about here. Taking a look at this problem might be a good way to educate ourselves anew on first principles.

ROGER KAPLAN *is an associate editor of the* Reader's Digest.

Hilton Kramer: Toward Israel my attitudes cannot be said to have changed much over the course of the last forty years. At times my fears for its future have been greater than at other times, and there have certainly been periods of irritation with one or another of its political leaders. But in no fundamental sense have my attitudes been changed by the history of the state. There was never a time when I believed that Israel was destined to achieve a perfect society or an ideal political order. I have therefore suffered no disappointments on that score. The most I ever hoped for—given the way the world was going, it seemed to me a good deal—was that Israel, while providing a homeland and a haven for those Jews who wished or needed to live out their lives there, would at the same time establish and maintain a system of government that met the highest standards of Western democracy. In both of these respects—as a homeland for the Jews and as a Western democracy—Israel has, in my view, amply and honorably fulfilled its mission in the world. It has done so, moreover, in the face of the gravest and most unremitting threats to its very existence—threats in every case posed by the enemies of democracy. We, as Jews, know the blessings that democracy has brought us, and it has been immensely gratifying to see those blessings firmly established in the political life of Israel. Global history since the end of World War II has seen nothing to parallel this remarkable triumph of a fledgling democracy under siege. It is an extraordinary achievement, and one doesn't have to be Jewish, I think, to feel a deep sense of identification and pride with it. But, alas, one does have to be a true believer in democracy.

That there has been an "upsurge of Jewish criticism of Israel" is unquestionably true. A part of this criticism—a very small part, I am afraid—may actually be taken to be a tribute to what is perceived to be the vitality of Israel's democratic institutions. It is criticism made in the belief that Israel is now a society so deeply rooted in its democratic traditions that it is capable of profiting from the kind of debate that it is perfectly proper for a democracy and its friends to carry on about its policies. But as friends of this particular democracy, we know that much of the new-style criticism now directed at Israel does not answer to this description—that it derives, in fact, from a certain kind of hostility to democracy itself.

It is my impression, anyway, that this criticism derives—directly or indirectly—from the political culture of the international Left. It is based on, among other things, that lethal combination of guilt, fear, cynicism, and sentimentality toward the Third World that is now one of the most destructive and disabling forces in world affairs—destructive and disabling, that is, to the democracies. (It is a boon, of course, to totalitarianism.) As a model of post-colonial democratic government, Israel is a standing reproach to the ongoing political debacle of the Third World. That isn't the only reason Israel has become a target of the international Left, but it is one of the primary reasons.

CAN the recent upsurge in Jewish criticism of Israel really be separated from this Left-inspired campaign to discredit the state and question its very right to exist? I am not sure that it can. No doubt other factors are involved, but this seems to me the principal one. In the United States, the collapse of the liberal Center in American political life—and most especially, the virtual disappearance of liberal anti-Communism as an article of mainstream political belief—has had disastrous consequences for Israel. But then, it has had disastrous consequences for the United States and its role in world affairs, and there is an obvious connection between these two developments.

For the eruption of criticism that began to be directed against Israel in the aftermath of the war in Lebanon was a virtual replica of the kind of criticism that erupted in this country—against this country—during the war in Vietnam. In both cases it was criticism based on a desire to see the forces representing democracy go down to defeat. It was criticism designed to deny the democracies their political and moral legitimacy. That Jews now play a prominent role in this criticism of Israel should therefore come as no surprise to anyone who witnessed the role of American liberals in leading the anti-American campaign that came out of the war in Vietnam.

This suggests to me that it may be fruitless to attempt to conduct an inquiry into the criticism of Israel by American Jews in isolation from an inquiry into the relation that now obtains between American Jews and the political culture of

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the international Left. Difficult and painful as it is for a Jew to have to raise such a question, the question must nonetheless be asked: why is it that so many American Jews in the media, in the academy, in the social agencies, and in the literary and cultural world have committed themselves to supporting an ideological objective that, if it were ever to be realized on their own home ground, would almost certainly bring about their destruction? If we were in possession of an answer to that question, we would be a lot closer to explaining why so many Jews have joined in the criticism of Israel with so much enthusiasm.

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Irving Kristol: I am pro-Israel not only because it is a decent, civilized country that is a fine addition to our Western civilization—there have not been many such additions since World War II—but because it is today, after the Holocaust, the sheet anchor of the Jewish people. Except among the very Orthodox, it is the existence of the nation and the state of Israel, more than anything else, that today connects young Jews all over the world with one another, with their common past, and with a sense of a common future. Under modern circumstances, a self-sustaining Jewish Diaspora is a highly problematic prospect.

But what does it mean to be "pro-Israel"? It certainly does *not* mean being uncritical of the Israeli government's policies in the areas of economics, religion, or foreign affairs. Just as being "pro-American" is consistent with explicit discontent over American policies, or even over many aspects of American life, so being "pro-Israel" is consistent with a similar discontent. Essential to any such distinction between "pro" and "anti" is not one's critical posture but the point of departure for such criticism. I am "pro-American" because I *like* this country just as it is, because I think this is a *good* country just as it is, a *good* society just as it is—even though I can think of all sorts of ways by which it could become better. I am "pro-Israel" for exactly the same reasons. The fact that one can so easily imagine a better nation is, in either case, irrelevant. People who permit such imaginings to dominate their thinking are in the grip of a political delusion. Similarly, Americans or Israelis who are hypercritical of their countries while pompously proclaiming their loyalty to an ideal version are in fact "anti." Authentic loyalty is to one's incarnate country—as to one's incarnate husband or wife—not to some ideal version.

The most viciously anti-Israel Jews I know are all Israelis (just as the most bitterly anti-Americans I know are Americans). They are, as it happens, left-wing Israelis and this is no accident. Political utopianism used to be as characteristic of the Right as of the Left, but ever since World War II it is overwhelmingly a left-wing phenomenon. To be left-wing these days means to be contemptuous of Western societies, with their emphasis on individual liberty and material prosperity—"consumerism," as it is called—and of Western civilization itself. Left-wing "idealism" is, as it always has been, collectivist and egalitarian. It therefore is sympathetic to, or at the very least indulgent of, collectivist regimes that are ideologically hostile to free-market economies and are also ideologically egalitarian (though in actuality nothing of the sort). True, the type of left-wing regime epitomized by the Soviet Union is by now so discredited that many on the Left feel free to call themselves "anti-Communist." But they keep hoping against hope that newer, "socialist" models of their ideal will be more acceptable. At the very least, they insist on being anti-capitalist, and are therefore hostile to the liberal societies which always are, to a substantial degree, based on a market economy.

In Israel, as in the United States, it is among the Jewish "intellectuals" that one finds the most vociferous and unrestrained "anti" sentiments. Some of the Israelis are disillusioned and embittered Zionists cherishing the original socialist-Zionist vision of a nation that would also be an egalitarian community. Enchanted by such a fantasy, they are repelled by the reality of modern, urban Israeli society and of an Israeli government whose foreign policy is shaped by the necessities of realpolitik. But most are simply modishly left-wing, which is also the case with so many Jewish intellectuals in the United States. Among these American Jewish (along with many non-Jewish) intellectuals, the fact that Israel is a loyal ally of the United States is, by itself, sufficient grounds for disaffection.

WITHIN American Jewry as a whole, however, the situation is more complex. Most American Jews are pro-Israel without qualification, letting their instinctive wisdom guide them. But then there is what is called "the American Jewish community," i.e., the 10 percent or so who are active in Jewish organizations of one kind or another, and who feel compelled to temper their natural pro-Israel sympathies with a more "sophisticated" critical stance. The compulsion flows from the professionals who staff these Jewish organizations. They are overwhelmingly liberal—which means they are hypersensitive to criticism from the Left. They are identical, in their basic political attitude, with their confrères who staff the American Civil Liberties Union, the United Nations Association, various "public-interest" law firms, and who are

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consumer activists, environmentalists, feminist activists, etc.

All the major Jewish organizations are effectively controlled by these "new-class" types. The businessmen and lawyers who supposedly "govern" these organizations may be conservative or far more moderate in their liberalism, but they are nonideological men and women who are quite impotent when confronted with the ideological professionals they theoretically supervise. Ronald Reagan received approximately one-third of the Jewish vote in 1984, but no major Jewish organization makes a serious effort to reflect this portion of the Jewish political spectrum.

IN SHORT and in sum, the emergence of anti-Israel sentiment within the "American Jewish community" has nothing whatsoever to do with what is happening in Israel. It is part and parcel of the same phenomenon which has produced anti-Israel sentiments in all the socialist parties of Western Europe, once a bastion of pro-Israel feeling. Forced to choose between an actual Israel, a Western democracy populated by real (and hence imperfect) Jews, on the one hand, and utopian hopes (mainly focused today on the Third World) for "social justice" and a "new social order" on the other, the Left in all countries (including Israel itself!) has opted for the latter. American liberalism, which has been moving steadily Left over the last fifteen years—Senator McGovern's capture of the Democratic party in 1972 was the watershed—mainly reflects this new ideological orientation. So, to a significant degree, does the "Jewish community."

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Max Lerner: I start with the Holocaust as the shattering event of the century—and not only of Jewish history within it. It didn't in itself create the state of Israel, which has its own immediate historical context. But in the longer perspective of history Israel as a lively, functioning entity is the great responsive event to that shattering one. That was why I joined with Hillel Kook (then Peter Bergson) and his unlikely band of Palestinian Jews in their desperate effort, from late 1941 on, to enlist world opinion for the rescue of the Jews of Europe.

Some of my friends were shocked at my consorting with a maverick huddle of Jabotinsky adherents whom they saw as "right-wing nationalists," even "fascists." I gave no heed to them. This was the only fighting show in town in that bleak time, and we were battering ourselves against the cold indifference of Franklin D. Roosevelt and the State Department. Later, when the new state of Israel was fighting for recognition, I felt I belonged with the Labor Zionists who were doing much of the hard work of settlement.

In both cases the fate of my people was too overwhelming a stake to allow the luxury of factional loyalties. It was a time to go with the organism—and the organism was the assertion of life welling up responsively in the form of a new state constructed as an answer to death. It was a case of survival straining to create the conditions of flourishing.

IF THE first twenty years were a Golden Age, the second were an Iron Age—which is still continuing. I don't share the feeling of some American intellectuals that it is a deterioration story, the result of some mysterious "inner corruption" of the Israeli leaders and people. This has been one of the traps of history and its contradictions; exactly because Israel was hailed as a symbol of deliverance, it has been weighted down with a double standard which denies it the right we accord to other nations, to cope with old and new injustices and with multiple enemies in a harsh age. We must scorn this corrosive wreath of guilt which some commentators have lifted from their own conscience and placed around the heads of the Israelis.

The late 1960's, the flowering of the antiwar culture in America, were also the time of Israel's resounding triumph in the 1967 war. That proved the dividing line for Israel's political culture and its belief system. When the letdown came in the 1970's, and especially with the blunder of the 1982 war in Lebanon, the young Israeli intellectuals developed, out of their own crisis of conscience, some of the same alienations that they had observed in their American models earlier. The scarring fact was the political and moral confusion left by the war in Lebanon, and the need to police a hostile Palestinian population who are today in Israel but not of it. It has left the Israelis with a less confident assurance than earlier of the essential rightness of their cause.

Yet this doesn't shake me as it does some others. It isn't that the Israelis as a besieged nation—one I feel close to—are beyond my judgment. All of us have learned to be critical of the America we are part of. Yet in both instances I don't embrace a double standard on the theory that we must be more exacting toward a nation we invest with a superior moral mission. That way lies a confusion of both language and thought.

Israel is a developing nation, with a tiny population to draw upon for its necessary elites of leadership. Yet it doesn't enclose itself in the isolation of a Masada fortress. It is at the vortex of

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life, "normalizing" itself by sharing with others the turmoil of nationhood in a polarized great-powers world, striving to stay abreast of high technology without losing wholly the animating force of a land of pioneers.

It also shares the fate of others in its shifting demographics which strain its continuing sense of identity. The demographic shift toward the Sephardis, mainly from the Orient, has ended the sway of secular socialism and replaced it with religion and traditional values. This change has been met with dismay by some Israeli writers who regard it as ushering in an era of distorted purposes and diminished values. They miss the complexity of the swirling currents of change. David Ben-Gurion noted long ago that Israel is a state but not yet fully a nation in its consciousness. From my conversations over the years with him, however, I suspect he would not cast a cold eye on the energies of the newcomers, and would see their fruitfulness for the future.

IN MY OWN intellectual journey the two paths—of my American and my Jewish consciousness—have converged on a tangled thicket of traditions, myths, and contradictions which enclose both America and Israel. The dangers in America lie in losing a true Jewish identity without discovering a true American one, and wandering between two fragmented selfhoods. I have come to understand that all along they have not been separate paths for me but polar aspects of a single journey—and that the polarities have been within myself. Israel, with its existence and survival, has made it more possible for me to fuse them.

Life is harder and more dangerous in Israel than in America. But in Israel, given the historic entanglement of the Jews in the world's moral and creative life, the danger and hardship have meaning as a response to both nihilism and annihilation.

We sometimes ignore the fact that Israel is not only the first Jewish state of our modern times but—if it fails or is driven into the sea—it will also be the last. It carries a weighty, even a sacred, freightage that will always contain me within it.

MAX LERNER *is a syndicated columnist and author whose books include* The Age of Overkill *and* America as a Civilization, *which has just been issued by Holt in an updated thirtieth-anniversary edition.*

Edward N. Luttwak: My response is in answer to your third question only. At a time of worldwide disenchantment with would-be rational public systems (states, institutions, corporations), when Americans are skeptical of the future of the United States, Frenchmen are rueful about France, Germans are famously pessimistic about Germany, hitherto self-celebrating Soviet and Chinese regimes catalog their inadequacies, Arabs despair about Arabdom, and more of the same is heard from Argentina to Zambia, it is not surprising that Israel too is in a season of internal and external criticism.

But because ignorance plays such a large role in American Jewish conceptions of Israel, the worldwide mood has a particularly strong effect. In the past, ignorance gave much scope for benevolent myths, *à la* Leon Uris. At present, ignorance gives as much scope for malevolent myths.

TO BEGIN with the seemingly trivial: Jews known to me who travel widely overseas do not travel to Israel because they imagine that it is vulgar in the familiar lower-middle-class style, "like Miami Beach." Some who do eventually get there report with every evidence of surprise that "Jerusalem is really beautiful," or that the country is actually Mediterranean in character, not at all like the Catskills or Dade County. Thus even the simplest kind of tourist information that is commonplace among non-Jewish Europeans (Israel is expensive, it attracts the St. Moritz-Cannes crowd, not package tourists) has not reached seemingly well-informed American Jews. Only about a third of all American Jews have ever been there, of course.

But it is political provincialism that Americans are famous for. Jews known to me who are active in Washington foreign-policy circles speak of Meir Kahane (the "Kahane phenomenon" they would say) in a manner that can be explained only by their ignorance of the implications of a proportional-representation system. They have obviously never reflected on who might sit in the U.S. Congress if an Israeli-type electoral system were instituted over here—say, 100-150 white supremacists, black separatists, radical environmentalists, Communists, Puerto Rican separatists, etc. What would that tell us about the United States? Only that it had adopted a proportional-representation system.

What *is* true is that Israel participates in the worldwide disenchantment with would-be rational public systems, which induces many to retreat into private life, or more noticeably to embrace integral religiosity ("fundamentalism" in American terms). At a time when Protestants (not only here), many Catholics, more Muslims, and even some of the tranquil Buddhists are deserting urbane and ceremonial religion for fervent, absolutist affirmations of one sort or another, the Jews too are part of the herd—with today's Orthodox slipping into yesterday's ultra-Orthodox forms, while the latter in turn slide into extremist militancy. As often before, the Jews are much less

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different than their enemies imagine, or they themselves believe.

AMERICAN political provincialism is accentuated when it comes to political violence. Americans are the most blasé of peoples about criminal violence, and perhaps the most naive about political violence overseas, forever confusing bloodthirsty revolutionaries with reformers-in-arms, professionalized gunmen with believers-in-arms, and so on. Thus Jews known to me who claim political sophistication nevertheless accept at face value newspaper headlines of the "Palestinian-school-girl-shot-by-Israeli-settler" type. They do not imagine that in a struggle against *inhibited* occupiers young girls are the specifically chosen victims, just as they do not comprehend what is meant by the words "rock-throwing" and "barricade" in the text. The notion that the recent Gaza Strip shootings, for example, resulted from prepared ambushes, where cars are first blocked and then attacked in deadly fashion by dozens or hundreds of (female) stone-throwers, has apparently never occurred to them. They are shocked by the suggestion that they too might shoot in similar circumstances.

But American Jews do not shoot, of course. Retaining attitudes toward arms and the armed forces of all nations that miraculously preserve intact the fears evoked in their great-grandparents by czarist conscription and czarist Cossacks, they detest all that is military. Intellectually, so to speak, American Jews realize that the Jews of Israel have been engaged in an armed struggle for survival. Emotionally, they continue to resist its implications. Hence the widespread banal confusion between the Israeli reality of a heavily militarized garrison state and the fantasy of a "militaristic" Israel. That the adjective defines nonfunctional intrusions of military values into civilian society, whereas the distinguishing characteristic of Israeli militarization is its strictly functional character, are facts that may be understood intellectually but are not absorbed emotionally.

Finally, there is the effect of discordant Israeli voices in influencing American Jewish attitudes. The Jews are an ancient people but their state-political (i.e., responsible-for-consequences) culture is very immature. Not surprisingly, the response of many Israelis to many contingencies is hysterical. Such chronic exaggeration is often accepted at face value over here, so that negative caricatures of Israeli reality are often imported from Israel itself.

EDWARD N. LUTTWAK *holds the Arleigh A. Burke Chair in Strategy at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington, D.C. His most recent book is* Strategy: The Logic of War and Peace *(Harvard University Press).*

Michael A. Meyer: It has always seemed to me that the attitude of "critic," when assumed by American Jews toward the state of Israel, is fundamentally wrong. For critics, whether of politics or the arts, necessarily assume an unengaged posture that makes possible the degree of objectivity their task requires. The motion-picture critic has no role or stake in the film he is watching. His task is to pass judgment. Only a Jew utterly lacking in Jewish commitment can be a critic of Israel in that sense.

But other stances are problematic as well. One that troubles me as much as that of the uncommitted critic is the wholly apathetic attitude taken from outside the circle of debate. If the Lebanon war increased the ranks of critics, perhaps even more it multiplied the number of Jews who ceased to care about Israel because they could not identify with the values of its current leadership. Critics at least studied the issues; these others simply withdrew.

On the opposite side, of course, there remain the unquestioning supporters of Israel who will defend the state's policies whatever they may be, who bridle at any questioning of Israeli conduct. They hasten to expose such questioning on the part of Christians as veiled anti-Semitism, on the part of Jews as masked self-hatred. In their eyes it is the role of American Jews to support, not to propose; to follow plans laid down in Jerusalem, not to help shape them.

For the past thirty years, since I first studied in Israel as an undergraduate in 1957, I have tried to avoid falling into the ranks of the critics, the disenchanted, or the knee-jerk yea-sayers. I grew up in a Reform congregation whose rabbi was a leading American Zionist. From him I received an idealized picture of the Return to Zion, the fructification of the land, the building of a Jewish state and society. After a year in the country, I returned both disabused of my naiveté and with much closer emotional ties to Israel than I had believed possible. After that, sitting on the sidelines was no longer an option. So seriously did I now take Zionism that, paradoxically, I was for a long time unable to call myself a Zionist. I accepted David Ben-Gurion's assertion that the term applied only to those who had gone on *aliyah* or were about to pack their bags. Only in 1975, when the United Nations General Assembly alleged that Zionism was a form of racism, did I decide that even though in all likelihood I would make my life in America, it was now imperative for Jews to display their Zionism defiantly. I have not ceased to do so, but it is a Zionism with its own liberal program within the larger organizational Zionist framework.

IN THE early 70's I joined an organization called Breira ("choice"), which argued for alternatives to Israeli political and military policies following the Six-Day War. In retrospect, its platform,

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adopted in the winter of 1977, was not at all extreme. Its most controversial point called for Israeli recognition of the Palestinians' right to national self-determination, but it also called for Arab recognition of Israel's right to exist as a sovereign Jewish state within secure borders. Although similar positions were adopted then and later by Israeli doves both outside and within the Israeli establishment, a hail of criticism rained down on Breira. It had dared to challenge the consensus of unquestioning support for Israeli policy. It was viewed as dangerous to the state, and its members were sometimes prevented from publicly presenting their positions to fellow Jews.

I am still persuaded that most of those who joined Breira were neither wrongheaded nor naive. They possessed a commitment to Israel as strong as—and sometimes stronger than—that of their traducers. If they erred, it was in failing to point out strongly and frequently enough their affirmations about Israel along with their proposals for change. That made them sometimes seem (and a few indeed were) unappreciative and detached critics. Yet fears they would do damage to the image of Israel among non-Jews and weaken Israel's political position proved greatly exaggerated. By the end of the 70's the organization had died, having neither achieved the goals of its leaders nor realized the fears of its opponents.

In the last decade American Jewish leadership has taken more independent stances on Israeli policy and been more ready to use its influence. It has not hesitated to espouse the views of individuals and factions in Israel other than those currently in power. Within the American Jewish community there has been more freedom of debate. And Israel's position in the centers of American power has not suffered.

What has been a bit worrisome is the appearance of op-ed articles in the general press loudly proclaiming Jewish loyalty to America while denigrating Israeli achievements—as if American Jewry and American Jewish creativity required parading Americanism and demeaning Israeli academic and cultural institutions. Yet from my vantage point the fearful and defensive voices appear isolated. The recent large vote for delegates to the World Zionist Congress is surely a sign that Zionist commitment and appreciation of Israel's importance remain vibrant.

I must admit that I have been pained by a number of Israeli actions and inactions during the last decade. I still believe that the right stance for American Jews is to speak their minds freely on Israel, to one another and to the Israelis. I am also convinced that it must be done not as armchair critics but as fellow performers on the stage of contemporary Jewish history, where Israel is central but American Jewry plays a significant and integrated role. Danger arises for Israel when too many American Jews just sit in the audience.

Of course Israel has disappointed a lot of hopes. But it has fulfilled others. Our son has served his term in the Israeli army and settled on the second Reform kibbutz, Lotan, in the Negev desert. For him Israel represents a personal fulfillment impossible elsewhere. For myself, I shall continue to have my own hopes for Israel: for a secure state that combines values drawn from Jewish tradition with the democratic heritage of the West. And from my corner of the stage I shall press for their realization.

As the fortieth anniversary of Israeli independence approaches, Zionism itself remains unfulfilled. Its hopes, no less than its security, must not be endangered.

MICHAEL A. MEYER *is professor of Jewish history at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati and the author of the forthcoming* Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism *(Oxford University Press).*

Jacob Neusner: Canadian and American Jews remain Zionists in affirming that the Jews are a people, one people; that the Jews constitute a political, not solely a religious, entity; and that the state of Israel forms not merely another nation but the Jewish state. The prevailing consensus leaves slight space for the anti-Zionist positions that a secular state violates Judaism or that statehood betrays Jews' universalist mission, and in an age of many commitments in the global village, no one is afraid of the charge of dual loyalty any more. The state of Israel, the centerpiece of Zionism, moreover, defines one important concern for American and Canadian Jewry.

We do, however, sense a sea change nowadays. Relationships between American Jewry and the state of Israel, once marked by our submission to their dictates, have so changed that, in not a few aspects of shared discourse, we take the unfamiliar role of the self-confident party and they the equally strange role of the uncomfortable one. We are telling them precisely what we think, even when they do not want to hear it, and, after decades of manipulating us, they do not like the worm's turning, not one bit. That represents a change in our sense of ourselves, and therein lies a shift, also, now clearly perceived in our attitudes toward the state of Israel. We remain Zionists, but we also affirm *who* we are, which is Jews of a different kind from those who correctly see "being Jewish" as being state-builders and Jewish citizens of a Jewish state. We remain Zionists, but we continue to affirm *where* we are, which is in the diverse societies of America and Canada. And we recognize a new age in the history of the Jewish people, Israel, but we affirm *when* we are, which is in the age at hand, long prior to the coming of

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the messiah, and not in a messianic age in which the eschatological ingathering of the exiles will take place and a totally-other, new epoch in the history of holy Israel, the Jewish people, will begin.

So we say yes to being Jewish and in political loyalty something more, which is American or Canadian. We say yes to living here, and not in the state of Israel. And we say, even, yes to the age of history in which we find ourselves, the continuing age of exile from redemption, which has not yet happened. These represent considerable differences in perception, and if our vision of the realities of the hour for Israelis causes vertigo, well, their vision makes us dizzy too.

But insofar as the state of Israel made promises to the Jewish people, I think it has more than kept the promises that ordinary people, in an unredeemed world, doing only what a person can do, can keep. The Jewish problem of homelessness has been solved. The Jewish problem of political impotence has been solved. We Jews can now act together and with effect, through powerful institutions, the single most effective organized ethnic-religious community in this country, and the state of Israel has taught lessons to Jews throughout the world on how to become a political entity of power and effect. The Jewish problem of cultural confusion has been solved, for a centerpiece of common concern shared by nearly all Jews throughout the world focuses discourse on common questions of meaning and purpose. We may not find compelling what happens to Jews in Sydney or Cape Town, and they may not care what is going on in Providence. But all of us share concern for Jerusalem, and, through Jerusalem, for one another too.

IN THE context of complete success in achieving precisely the goals that Zionism set forth to accomplish and did gain in the creation of the state of Israel, Jews rightly define for themselves new goals, and that accounts for criticism of the state of Israel, its policies in particular, but also its character as a country and a society. That criticism forms a healthy response not to Israeli failure but success. What people set out to do they have now done. But life goes on, and people now discover the one enormous flaw inherent in success: there really is a tomorrow. The state of Israel solved the Jewish problems that Zionism identified. But the Zionist theory of Israel, both the world-people and also the particular state, has not kept pace. While American Jews can explain to themselves who they are, where they are, and when they are, their counterparts in the state of Israel find considerable difficulty in framing an equivalent account of themselves—or of us.

They said they would build a home and a refuge and they have. But they also claimed it would form the spiritual center of world Jewry, and it does not, cannot, and will not. The issues of its national life realized in education and culture and scholarship prove remote from the issues of our national life, as these come to concrete expression in our education, culture, and scholarship. What about the spiritual center in Jewish scholarship? Alas, in Jewish learning, to us they appear mere collectors and arrangers of facts, asking no important questions, proposing no interesting hypotheses, with nothing much at stake in whether or not they are right. Dull-witted, narrow-minded, uneducated, and therefore also brutish, they can learn nothing from us, and we, little from them beyond the facts they witlessly celebrate. Above all, they had in mind a "normal" state, only to find that no state is "normal," and all nations have problems. So Zionism through the state of Israel was going to mark the end of history as Jews had known it and the beginning of a new age in history. But it is only a fresh chapter in a story that has no end in sight. What criticism on the part of Jews in the *Golah* represents therefore is three things:

First, our affirmation that we count too.

Second, our contention that we are not second-class citizens in a world in which to be Israeli is the normal way to be a Jew but to be a Jewish American/American Jew is the abnormal way.

And third, our quite reasonable expectation that our opinions will register too.

That is not to say we who do not pay taxes, serve in the army, make our careers, and live out our lives in the state of Israel should stand in judgment of those who do. It is only to say that, if we are a people, one people, and if the state of Israel is the Jewish state, and we are and it is, then we too expect a hearing for our views. And we are not going to apologize for being who we are, living when we do, and also taking pride in our own country. Nor would Israelis want otherwise for us but what they have for themselves, with their well-justified pride in being who they are, where they are, and when they are. For we share, with them and because of their achievements as much as ours, one of the great ages of the life of Israel, the Jewish people.

JACOB NEUSNER *is University Professor and Ungerleider Distinguished Scholar of Judaic Studies at Brown University. His most recent book is* Self-Fulfilling Prophecy: Exile and Return in the History of Judaism *(Beacon).*

William Phillips: Though I never have been a Zionist, I feel even more strongly today than in the past few decades about the need to support Israel—because of the mounting criticism by people who obviously know better than any Israeli government what is best for Israel, for its relation to America, and its relation to the entire Middle East. By support I do not

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mean blind support; obviously, enlightened Jews and non-Jews are bound to be aware that Israel's beleaguered state raises many difficult—some seemingly insoluble—questions about its relation to the Arabs, to other countries, and to its very survival.

Still, I do not recall any other instance of political *chutzpah* in giving lessons to another country on how to conduct its affairs. Israeli citizens who criticize the policies of their government are at least part of its fate—and committed to its defense. But some of the American critics, to borrow a figure of speech from James Joyce, act as though they are forging the uncreated conscience of the Israeli.

WITHIN the realm of the possible—to use Aristotle's criterion—I believe Israel has done as well as it could, against almost insuperable odds, in satisfying the expectations of those who feel the Jews should have a homeland. After the Holocaust, this vision of their own nation gained considerable moral force. But if we are to judge Israel by utopian standards—that is, by impossible ones, as much of the current criticism does—then, of course, Israel will be found to fall short of ideal behavior. Common sense alone, however, without being obscured by high-minded political theory, should tell us that a tiny country, besieged by its Arab neighbors and by hostile world opinion, cannot outdo every other country in the world in moral impeccability. You cannot build an ideal democracy, with an unassailable foreign policy, in one country, and a small and militarily vulnerable one to boot. Nor am I impressed by the stand of those Jews who argue that Israel has to be better than any other country. This opens the back door to hostile criticism, if not to inverted anti-Semitism. Have not the Jews earned the right to be like anyone else?

THERE is too little recognition by the growing criticism of Israel of the terrible, almost insoluble, dilemmas Israel is trapped in. Some of the criticism, however, does point to a few of the moral and political predicaments that are now the subject of internal debate in Israel. No doubt, the rule over the Palestinians in the West Bank clouds the future of Israel. But it is not clear whether Israel simply can leave the West Bank without sacrificing its security, if not its very existence. Israel is also accused, with some justice, of dealing in trade and weapons with right-wing governments—something other countries do regularly. But what choice does Israel have in the face of sanctions against it by so many other nations? In general, there is a double standard in judging the behavior of Israel. Sometimes, it appears as though democratic Israel is being treated as if it were a right-wing dictatorship.

One has to ask why Israel is subjected to this one-sided and widespread criticism by Jews, although some of it is well-intentioned, as well as by anti-Semites and political extremists of all kinds. In my opinion, the reasons are embedded in the larger political history of our time. Clearly it is more than a Jewish question. However mistaken Israeli policies might be, they are not the cause. Often they are used as pretexts or justifications. When Menachem Begin was prime minister, Israel was said to be under the evil spell of "Beginism," though this sloganized disapproval has disappeared now that Shimon Peres is seen to have not very different views on many major issues.

The persistent faulting of Israel comes from the Right and the Left. There is the traditional anti-Semitism of the Right, which after the Holocaust had to mute its feelings, but now that liberals and leftists have joined the critical chorus, it is emboldened again to make public its true feelings. And there is a disillusionment with Israel now to be found on the Left. Some of it also reflects a sympathy for the Arabs, who appear to have taken the place of the proletariat in the Middle East. Much of it also seems to be a hangover from the earlier internationalist spirit of socialism, that was opposed to nationalist concerns. (I myself remember that when I was a Marxist briefly in the 30's, I believed the Jewish question was just part of the larger human question and could not be solved on its own.) But then why is Israel singled out?

My own sense of the situation is that the critical tide is part of a large political movement of ideas that prescribes certain attitudes on a variety of questions, including the existence and the policies of the state of Israel. But why this is so is an even more complex question—too complex to discuss here.

WILLIAM PHILLIPS *is editor of* Partisan Review, *professor of English at Boston University, and author of, most recently,* A Partisan View: Five Decades of the Literary Life (*Stein and Day*).

Daniel Pipes: Whatever else he did, Menachem Begin caused widespread emotional turbulence during his years of leadership, 1977-83. American politicians, media, and opinion polls vacillated wildly on the subject of Israel. Along with everyone else, I felt exhilarated when Sadat traveled to Jerusalem, dismayed at the drawn-out negotiations that followed, pleased when the peace treaty was signed, and troubled by the 1982 war. And there were dozens of other issues too, from the bombing of the Iraqi nuclear reactor to the West Bank settlements policy to the high inflation to the treatment of religious matters.

Even though most issues confronting Israel to-

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day remain quite unchanged, the Israeli roller coaster has, mercifully, been more level since 1983. Shamir is not Begin, Pollard is not Sabra and Shatila, and the much-discussed peace conference is not Camp David. Too, external factors have changed: Lebanon no longer excites opinion and the Iraq-Iran war now overshadows Israel's conflict with the Arabs. The calming of Israeli politics permits one to view the country with more equanimity and more distance. It's a well-deserved rest.

When considering Israel's achievements, one has to begin by recalling that its heroic era is over. Making the desert bloom, building a state, and achieving military miracles all belong to the past. And so too national consensus: unity of spirit and purpose was easy when the threat was immediate. But now the external threat is less deadly, or at least less palpable; it has come to resemble the distant and complex sort of danger that the USSR poses to the United States. As the threat becomes less immediate, the divisions in Israeli society emerge and are vented. Accordingly, Israel offers a far less inspiring picture than it did in the past.

The end of the heroic age in fact marks a great achievement; the country no longer lives at danger's edge. Even more than the whores and pickpockets hoped for by Ben-Gurion, the fractious quality of Israel's life symbolizes its transition to a normal society. Superficially, Israel disappoints; a more profound interpretation reveals that it has traversed much of the ground to maturity.

Likewise, the upsurge in criticism by American Jews of Israel reflects this maturation. In the old days, the Diaspora had to provide steady and almost unquestioning support for Israel, otherwise the whole enterprise was imperiled. Today, Israel's need for help has diminished. American Jews matter less, so they stray. Again, if not inspiring, this change reflects healthy developments.

THIS said, there is something distasteful about American Jews publicly going after Israel. I suspect, perhaps unfairly, that they thrill to the man-bites-dog quality of their actions.

How should they act, then, when they object to Israeli state policies? To formulate a code of conduct, it helps to ponder the proper behavior of the democratic citizen abroad. What should an American who disagrees with his government do when traveling, broadcast all his criticisms or pull his punches? Usually, the latter, for there is something undignified and confusing about airing every difference of opinion before outsiders. Some issues, of course, transcend this rule and require open, even vociferous, dissent, but these occur rarely in a democracy.

Mutatis mutandis, the same applies to Israel and American Jews. The relationship calls for discretion and a clear appreciation of the ways in which one's words can be misused. Different rules govern debate on the floor of the Knesset and in the American press. Even if this leads to the occasional charge of hypocrisy, the distinction is worth maintaining. This does not mean that American Jews should pretend to support what they do not agree with, but that their public criticism of Israel requires caution, tact, and thoughtfulness.

DANIEL PIPES *is director of the Foreign Policy Research Institute in Philadelphia and editor of its quarterly journal,* Orbis.

Richard Pipes: I recall the birth of the state of Israel and my first visit there in 1951. Unquestionably, I do not have quite the same emotions toward Israel that I felt then. For one, the miraculous emergence of a Jewish state very shortly after we had learned of the murder of six million Jews while the world stood by, indifferent, evoked a sense of joy which cannot be duplicated. Secondly, in the early years of its existence, Israel was a Spartan nation led by pioneers who set for themselves uniquely high moral standards.

Fortunately, anti-Semitism is no longer a mainstream phenomenon in the Western world, and Diaspora Jews no longer feel physically threatened. At the same time, Israel has become a "normal" society with its share of problems: its moral standards cannot be what they were when the country was populated by Zionist idealists. For all my sentimental and intellectual attachment to the Jewish state, therefore, I no longer feel quite the same concern and pride in it that I had felt thirty or forty years ago. This is natural: today we confront not a hope born of desperation, but a living reality.

Israel seems to me to have fulfilled the hopes placed in it in the following respects: (1) it has made good on the Zionist promise to provide a homeland for all Jews who desire to come; (2) it defends the interests of Jewish minorities in the Diaspora wherever they are threatened; (3) it has established a democratic regime in a region where such a phenomenon is all but unknown and provided its citizens with social services beyond anything seen in the Third World.

My personal disappointment with Israel has been due to the following: (1) Israel has acquired some of the uglier features of American materialism: at times I have the feeling that Israelis aspire to nothing loftier than creating a second California; (2) Israel's youth has largely lost the intellectual curiosity and cosmopolitanism that distinguish Diaspora Jews: its mental horizons seem very circumscribed; and (3) I find that Israelis have inherited and even developed what is perhaps the least attractive feature of the Jewish national character, namely tactlessness, of which

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they give evidence in some of their political as well as personal behavior.

ON BALANCE, the positive achievements of Israel solidly outweigh its failings. For this reason, I have little patience with Jewish carping about Israel. It is not that I object to foreign Jews criticizing this or that policy of the Jewish state in the creation and development of which they have played and continue to play a crucial role. What annoys me is the tacit assumption that Israel must be flawless and judged by standards applied to no other society. During the past two millennia Jewish communities have, indeed, maintained exceptionally high moral standards. But the standards of a minority living in the midst and under the protection of non-Jews clearly cannot be applied to a Jewish majority running a sovereign state in a messy world of other sovereign states.

I may also add that I sometimes have the impression that some non-Israeli Jews fear that the actions of the Israeli government may embarrass them and stimulate anti-Semitism. This was the case during the Israeli invasion of Lebanon which aroused great antagonism in the world. Whatever the merits of this particular military operation, it is difficult to sympathize with those Diaspora Jews who condemned it or who criticize other actions of Israel out of concern for their own status.

RICHARD PIPES *is Baird Professor of History at Harvard and served in 1981-82 at the National Security Council as Director, East European and Soviet Affairs. His latest book is* Survival Is Not Enough.

Dennis Prager: I was born eleven weeks after Israel was born. We have grown up together, with Israel always central to my Jewish identity.

When *Life* magazine featured "Israel's Bar Mitzvah" on its cover, I remember feeling as if *Life* were announcing my bar mitzvah, too.

During the Six-Day War, I walked to my college classes with a radio next to my ear. I took my first trip to Israel three weeks later—a trip that for a Hebrew-speaking, nineteen-year-old Jew with a Jewish day-school education and a Zionist camping background was overwhelming. I had always been in love with the fantasy of Israel. I then fell in love with Israel itself during those days of my own youthful romanticism and Israel's own youthful and romantic days of 1967.

I just knew I would go on *aliyah*. But I never did. Instead, I visited Israel almost every other year.

Today, as Israel and I approach our fortieth birthdays, I am not the romantic I was, and Israel is not the romantic country that it was in July 1967. The romance ended abruptly on Yom Kippur 1973.

I have always believed in both Isaiah and the Israel Defense Forces. I feel estranged from Jews who constantly invoke Isaiah but who maintain that military might pollutes—even though military might liberated Auschwitz and preserves the Jewish state.

And I feel estranged from Jews who want Israel to be a nation like any other, rejecting any notion that Israel ought to be a "light unto the nations."

I have never shared in the euphoria over Jewish possession of Judea and Samaria with their million non-Jewish inhabitants. Being able to settle in Jericho or visit Rachel's Tomb have always excited me less than building a strong, moral, modern, Jewish (religious but not theocratic) state. My dream is still an Israel that waters deserts, uses Jewish minds to conquer diseases, brings Judaism to Jewish communities throughout the world, and attempts to apply Judaism to humanity generally. The last thing Israel has needed is having to serve as an occupying power over civilians or, even worse, having to choose between democracy and a Jewish state, a choice that, *pace* Meir Kahane, is not necessary—though it would become so if Judea, Samaria, and Gaza were annexed.

But since Israel is obsessed with occupation, demography, a secular-religious split, and of course with sheer physical survival, in one way my "attitudes toward Israel have changed in recent years." I no longer realistically see Israel as embarking any time soon on a mission to realize Isaiah's dream that "From Zion shall go forth the Torah and the word of God from Jerusalem." I now see Israel "merely" as a haven for oppressed Jews, the best guarantor of the Jewish people's security, the primary source of world Jewry's dignity and most Jews' Jewish identity, and the restorer of most Jews' faith after the Holocaust.

Moreover, it is foolish to hold Israel responsible for not being more preoccupied with prophetic concerns. The occupation, to cite one example, was forced upon Israel, not sought by it—a fact that Israel's "prophetic" critics often ignore. Second, the change in my perception of Israel may simply be my own maturing about what a Jewish state can realistically achieve. Third, to the extent that prophetic dreams for Israel are valid, their nonrealization is at least as much my responsibility for having not gone on *aliyah* as it is Israel's. Finally, all Jews are responsible for "the word of God" not going forth from Jerusalem. Secular Jews do not believe in a word of God, and the religious are so preoccupied with either Judea and Samaria or with Halakhah that they say nothing to the world.

Therefore, when discussing Jewish criticisms of Israel, it is important to recognize the influence that Jews' dreams for Israel have on their perceptions of Israel. Much Jewish criticism of Israel emanates not from real failings, but from Israel's failure to live up to its idealized image in the

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Jewish mind. Critics on the religious Right compare Israel unfavorably to their dream of a halakhic state, and critics on the Left compare Israel unfavorably to their dream of a prophetic state.

As long as the critic is guided by common sense, a healthy awareness of Israel's isolation, and a profound sense of humility as an outsider whose children do not have to pay the price of flawed advice, Jews should be able to speak as freely about Israel as they do about any other topic of Jewish concern.

But there need to be some guidelines.

1. The critic must honestly ask himself why he is offering public criticism of Israel. Is it because there is no constructive alternative—such as through Jewish channels—or is it to garner attention for himself or his organization? It is, after all, very hard to deny oneself the opportunity to get published on the New York *Times* op-ed page.

2. Can the criticism have an adverse effect on Israel? The overwhelming and united American Jewish support of Israel has been a major factor in the equally overwhelming support for Israel among American political leaders. If the former is perceived as weakening, the latter will inevitably weaken.

3. Will it actually have any influence on Israeli policies—or is the organization playing to its own constituents? It is hard to believe that the Israeli government is more likely to welcome an international peace conference that includes the Soviet Union because an American Jewish organization has called upon it to do so. But the attention paid to the call may help that organization with its membership.

Israel does not usually benefit from public criticism by American Jews. First, Israel already receives an abundance of criticism from non-Jewish organizations—the New York *Times*, the newsweeklies, the networks, and the academic world. Second, Israel already hears any criticisms that we could make—from Israelis. It is not as if the American Jewish Congress is going to illuminate some area that somehow has eluded *Ha'aretz*, the Jerusalem *Post*, and Israeli radio and television, not to mention the political opposition.

To my mind, there are far more important tasks for American Jewish organizations with regard to Israel.

There is a danger that Israel will loom less and less significant in the lives of American Jews. American Jewish organizations need first and foremost to work on American Jews. It is glamorous, and sometimes urgent, to work in international affairs and to be received at the White House. But fewer and fewer American Jews care about Israel or even about being Jewish. These facts are more important for Israel's future welfare than any other single issue in American Jewish life.

The next time an American Jewish organization criticizes Israel, ask it how many members it has, how many of them are under forty (or even fifty), and if it does any work whatsoever in keeping American Jews Jewish. Such concerns, it seems to me, are more important to the *raison d'être* and credibility of American Jewish organizations—not to mention to Israel's own security—than their stand on an international peace conference or on the rioting in Gaza.

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Earl Raab: It is often not a question of whether "Israel has fulfilled or disappointed the hopes vested in it," but whether some of those hopes were unrealistic to begin with.

I am personally more comfortable than I was a quarter of a century ago when so many Israelis of my acquaintance were wearing their Isaiah on their sleeves. The burden of many Israeli parlor discussions was how to avoid becoming "just another Levantine nation"; how to meet David Ben-Gurion's call for "the creation of a model society which could become a light unto the nations"; how to become a *qualitative* Jewish state.

Today there is a broader acceptance among Israelis that their political state primarily exists for the protection and satisfaction of its own citizens. This does not deny a certain special responsibility to Jews everywhere, or the need to be bound by those civilized values which Judaism seeded. But Israel is a Jewish state mainly because most of its citizens are Jews, and because it has created a home for homeless Jews. That is the major expectation, difficult enough, against which Israel is to be measured.

Many American Jews lag behind Israelis in understanding this limited mandate. There *is* an upsurge of American Jewish criticism of Israel, and some of it is couched as disappointment that Israel has not proved altogether virtuous.

That was, of course, a utopian expectation. It is enough that under the circumstances, in its treatment of Arabs, in its policies generally, the state of Israel has behaved overall in at least as enlightened a fashion as any other political state in history.

In some Israeli and American Jewish circles, there was also an extravagant hope that Israeli and American Jewry would become bonded as one in religious, cultural, and tribal affinity. That hope has been largely disappointed, even though the state of Israel and its culture have been a

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major source of some considerable American Jewish renascence.

Among younger American Jews, by and large, emotional ties to Israel are growing thinner for reasons which go much deeper than whether Israel's "light unto the nations" may have seemed to dim on occasion.

Never traditional Zionists, most American Jews strongly supported the state of Israel as a response to the Holocaust. That was the foundation; pride in the Israeli miracle, and the panache it bestowed on American Jewry, were emotional superstructure. And many American Jews dreamily expected Israel to remain the culturally compatible homeland-away-from-home which they never had.

But Israel is its own land, and another land. There have necessarily emerged major ethnic and religious strains foreign to American Jews. And more basically, no way has been found to bridge the different life experiences of most Israeli and American Jewish youth.

The physical and social distance from Israel, and the distance from the experiences of the 1940's, rather than specific criticism of Israeli "faults," created that gap, which will not in the foreseeable future interfere with strong political support for Israel's survival although it may have other negative implications for American Jewry. But as far as "disappointment" is concerned, the emotional and cultural "gap" might well have been expected at the outset.

My own chief disappointment is that the state of Israel has not presciently enough addressed one of its survival problems. I know that the core of that problem is Arab intransigence, and am under no illusion that the amelioration of the Palestinian Arab/West Bank/Gaza situation would soften the general Arab desire to wipe out Israel. But my hindsight perception, confirmed by recent events, is that Israeli politicians have not moved as boldly and inventively as they might have to divest themselves safely of that perilous land-and-population yoke.

Just as disturbing in itself is one root cause of that perceived delinquency. Most American Jews appreciate the religious cast of the Israeli culture, and do not expect church-state separation, but they are repelled by the narrow sectarian religious lock on Israeli politics.

The apparently increasing political influence of such sectarianism—of "religious extremism," in the terms in which the sociologist Charles Liebman has defined it—is by all odds the major source of active disappointment about Israel among American Jews. Not only are they excluded by such religious extremism but, reared in American pragmatism, they see it as wantonly self-destructive. This development in Israel is understandably the major target of increasing American Jewish criticism.

In general, however, too much has been made of American Jewish criticism. Foolish or not so foolish, criticisms of internal Israeli life, or of perceived moral lapses by Israel, are not politically "dangerous" on the general American scene because they are usually matters of indifference to non-Jews. American Jewish criticism of Israeli foreign-policy *strategy*, no secret to American policy-makers, is not "dangerous" as long as those policy-makers are effectively reminded that such criticism is bounded by an unabated Jewish commitment to Israel's survival and America's support.

Much more dangerous to Israel is any political support some Jews may give to American isolationist or withdrawal tendencies, even if Israel is not mentioned. If clearly not on that track, American Jewish criticism is probably more often healthy than not.

Such criticism, if Israelis respond to it, could possibly help to create some real connections of the kind which are now missing. As least, that could be the case if American Jews would free themselves of the clutter of unrealistic and utopian expectations with which they have been burdened.

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Eugene V. Rostow: Are American Jews really disaffected with Israel? Surely many criticize Israeli policies with zest and sometimes with bitterness. But outspoken opinions, fair, unfair, and outrageous, have always been the intellectual fashion among the Jews. That individualism is sometimes expressed extravagantly is a small price to pay for a transcendent virtue.

For all their criticisms of Israel, however, American Jews, like other Americans, rally to Israel's support with increasing solidarity. Despite a steady diet of alarums and excursions, the political, economic, and military policies of the American government, the import of American elections, and every American public-opinion poll show the same pattern of closer and more harmonious cooperation between Israel and the United States. Episodes like the Pollard case and the Iran-*contra* affair occur and generate anxiety and friction. Then they fade away.

I shall confine my comments here to the aspect of the outcry against Israel with which I am most familiar—the charge that Israeli "intransigence" has prevented peace between Israel and its Arab neighbors. On the face of it, the accusation is absurd. But it is repeated daily in many forms and is therefore of genuine political importance.

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Since it is pressed most vehemently by people who sympathize with Third World "liberation" movements, it has special resonance among those in the West, including many American Jews, who consider themselves to belong to the "Left," however that slippery word is defined.

The claim that Israel is responsible for the absence of peace in the area has hardly changed in substance since 1921, when the Mandate for Palestine was established on Turkish territory by the authority of the victorious allies, accepted by Turkey, and confirmed by the League of Nations. Under the Mandate, the Jewish people had the right to settle in the entire area of the Mandate: that is, in what is now Jordan, Israel, and the territories in dispute between them, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Over vehement protests, that right was suspended by the British for the area of Palestine *east* of the Jordan, but is otherwise intact, and is still formally guaranteed by Article 80 of the United Nations Charter.

From the beginning, except for the Hashemites, the Arabs rejected the legitimacy of the Jewish homeland in Palestine as beyond the powers of the allies and the League, and have waged war against the Mandate and later the state of Israel with varying degrees of intensity ever since. Since the early 50's, the Soviet Union has exploited Arab hostility to the existence of Israel as an instrument for driving Britain, France, and the United States out of the Middle East and outflanking Western Europe from the south.

After each episode of open warfare in this prolonged struggle, the Security Council of the United Nations and the diplomacy of the Western powers have sought to persuade or cajole the Arab states to make peace with Israel. Egypt aside, these efforts have failed thus far.

After the Six-Day War in 1967, the Security Council adopted Resolution 242, which calls on the parties to make peace in exchange for Israel's withdrawal from some of the territories it occupied in the course of the Six-Day War to "secure and recognized boundaries," which would be established by agreement and could be different from the demarcation lines of the armistice agreements of 1949. After the Yom Kippur War in 1973, the provisions of Resolution 242 were made legally binding and direct negotiations were required by Security Council Resolution 338. Since Israel has already returned the Sinai, which is over 90 percent of the territory it occupied in 1967, a settlement with Jordan could satisfy Resolution 242 legally if it transferred all or some or none of the West Bank to Jordanian sovereignty. The politics of the problem is a different matter, although Jordan's attempt to annex the area in 1951 was not generally recognized.

Resolution 242 has not yet changed the pattern of diplomacy, save for Egypt. The Arabs endlessly demand that Israel retreat at least to the armistice lines without peace; Israel demands an agreement of peace before territorial questions can be settled. Thus one initiative after another is frustrated on the same issue.

THE current round in this convoluted diplomacy concerns King Hussein's initiative for making peace in the setting of an international conference convened to implement Resolutions 242 and 338. Published reports raise serious questions about whether Hussein's effort is genuine.

The reports allege that in 1986 Jordan agreed with Syria and the Soviet Union that while Jordanian representatives could meet secretly with Israelis, as they always have done, there would be no Jordanian negotiations with Israel except in an international conference which included Syria and the Soviet Union; that Jordan would not agree to a territorial settlement based on any deviation from the 1967 armistice lines favorable to Israel; and in any event would not make peace at all unless a comparable agreement was made between Syria and Israel. Newspaper accounts of this agreement appeared in the Middle East press, but were not given much prominence. Jordan has never denied that the agreement was made.

It is easy to understand why King Hussein might well have made such an agreement, which would repudiate Resolution 242 root and branch. No party in Israel could accept an agreement based on such terms, which would divide Jerusalem, return the Golan Heights to Syria, and deny any territorial change in the West Bank. As a result, Jordan and Israel would be left with the status quo, which is moderately comfortable for both countries—decidedly more comfortable than any peace likely to emerge in the present atmosphere. The scenario would result, however, in Israel, or more particularly the Likud party, being blamed for refusing to make peace. Continuing what is in effect a Jordanian-Israeli condominium in the West Bank would reduce the risk of assassination for King Hussein and spare Israel a wrenching debate on territorial questions. While it is nearly inconceivable that Shimon Peres has in fact condoned the Jordanian move, he is being accused of having done so. On the other hand, it is hard to imagine that King Hussein would have taken so momentous a step without Peres's acquiescence.

Whether the story turns out to be literally true, the deal it contemplates is implicit in the situation, taking into account Syrian and Soviet policy and the vulnerability of Jordan. It would make a charade of the peace process, split Israeli politics disastrously, and constitute an important defeat for the United States.

There is only one crumb of consolation in the sad story of the Arab-Israeli peace process thus far. It should convince the most zealous and Left-leaning American Jews that the blame for the failure to achieve peace between Israel and its neighbors, other than Egypt, rests exactly where it

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has been since the beginning: on the Arab rejection of the Jewish homeland and now the Jewish state in the Turkish territories which were made the Palestine Mandate after World War I.

EUGENE V. ROSTOW, *who served as director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (1981-83) and as Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs (1966-69), is currently visiting professor of law and diplomacy at the National Defense University.*

Edward Rothstein: When I was in Israel nearly five years ago, determined to assess the prophecies of apocalypse that had proliferated after the Lebanon war, nothing was more shocking than the clarity of certain facts. There were plenty of grand theories which imagined the entire conflict as an opposition of symmetrical vices and virtues. There were even fulsome metaphors of Belfast and South Africa and Nazi Germany drifting in the air like mist and clinging to every analysis. Meanwhile, though, the facts seemed unnoticed, sharply puncturing the ideological landscape.

What was one to make, for example, of the enormous television antennas that rose above the homes in Arab towns and villages in the West Bank shaped precisely like Eiffel Towers, each more ornate than the next? Or of the traffic congestion in these same small towns caused by groaning cranes and construction equipment—used not for the notorious settlements, but for Arab villas and buildings, arising with the confidence of continued prosperity?

Why, too, was there so much caution, fear, and anger in the eyes of some Arabs in East Jerusalem, Nablus, and Jericho as they spoke of their passionate rejection of the PLO, and so much relief as they mentioned the then-recent Lebanese war? And why did these voices never seem to find their way into the newspapers?

Finally, what was to be made of that awesomely saccharine poster hanging above a red velvet chair in the home of the deposed Arab mayor of Hebron, showing a barefoot young girl in a nightgown standing in a plastic meadow and gazing sweetly at a plastic moon? Did it have any relation to the sweet ingenuous history of the Hebron Arabs that the former mayor presented to his guests along with the plums and spiced coffee?

So great was the disparity between the received versions of West Bank political and cultural life and such piquant facts facing the observer, that it seemed as if some master illusionist had created a diversion, distracting attention from the material world as ideology was pulled out of a worn hat. It is common now in academic circles to speak about "discourse" and its hegemony, the way in which speech about an object defines it, limits it, and asserts power over it. The critical discourse about Israel—which has grown in expanse and confidence since I sojourned there—has actually come into such power. Try asserting in politically mixed company that the Palestinian Arabs are not a people in the same way the Jews are a people. The very sentence becomes a badge of crudity, a violation of manners rather than a historical appraisal worth discussion.

THE critical discourse about Israel attains some of its power by asserting a sort of universal symmetry, thus simplifying analyses. There are two peoples, each of whom has erred, each of whom has equivalent claims and similar goals, now locked in a tragic embrace. These tendentious symmetries, curiously, patronize the Arabs by asserting that their culture is no different from ours; but in recompense, they become heirs to a mirror history of the Jews, proudly writing about their own Diaspora, establishing an Arab Anti-Defamation League and a United Palestinian Appeal. Particularity and detail are swallowed by the "hegemony" of this discourse, which aims, ultimately, to swallow the individuality of the Jewish state as well.

And, in fact, these models have even been adopted by large numbers of Israelis beset by anxiety and uncertainty. Only historical accident separates the occupied territories from the state on the other side of the "Green Line." If the Jew is an oppressor in Hebron, why is he not an oppressor in Jaffa and Jerusalem? If the December riots in Gaza proved—as was asserted on the front pages of the New York *Times*—that Palestinian nationalism must be accommodated by Israel, then why should not any of the other intense and violent reactions against the state be taken as proof of Israel's ignominy? What is at stake is not just contemporary behavior, but the history and foundation of Israel itself. In this view, Israel was born out of need, but also out of injustice, and original sin is bound to haunt it until expiated.

What makes this Israeli anxiety so haunting is that the legitimacy of Zionism itself is at issue. Once upon a time, Zionism dreamed not just of an ordinary state, but of a new world, inspired by socialist ideals and spiced with utopianism. But this mythic past and imagined future have been supplanted by the sorry present, and isn't that proof enough of Zionism's failure? A state exists, but it is no better than it is. So the partisan intellectual battles of fifty years ago, when the hopes first developed, return to plague the real problems of today with a vengeance. *All* hopes are dashed. Who hoped for automobile exhaust in Jerusalem, or for incessant military service, or inefficient government? Who hoped for battles over Hebron or conflicts over Jewish Orthodoxy? Who hoped, that is, for anything real?

AND so we find the disillusion of the Jew, marked by remorse and ideology and apocalypse. Here, in

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the United States, he knows he bears an allegiance to Israel, but that allegiance is qualified by a multitude of dissatisfactions. The support the country once received was an easy one: it was grounded in the spotlessly superior record of a certified victim as well as in notions of regional strategic importance. But for the critics, the first is soiled and the second under attack, so what ground is there for support? The appeal can only be to the mere fact of Jewish identity, something that might even resemble nationalism. Nationalism, though, with its declaration of self-interest, leaves a bad taste. Israel fighting in self-defense is fine, but Israel fighting for a mode of existence, a type of government, even for a country that is no more than merely Jewish and somehow less than sublime? There are few American intellectuals who would be tempted to argue such a position for the United States, let alone for a country to which loyalties must be secondary.

Of course some American Jewish criticism is quite sincere: some would have to be, for there is no lack of problems in Israel for a concerned outsider to address in a spirit of understanding. But it is lost amid the swirl of self-righteousness, anger, ideology, resentment of things lost, and relief at the prospect, finally, of ceasing to struggle. This pose takes pride in going against the grain, as if such criticism were a burden to be borne like the words of the Prophets. But it is less a burden borne than a burden lifted. The masks of strenuous advocacy can be removed, those of virtue and pained wisdom taking their place. True criticism is far more difficult, and far less "virtuous."

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Jonathan D. Sarna: The Israel of American Jews—the Israel that they imagined in their minds, dreamed about, and wrote about—was for well over a century a mythical Israel, an Israel that revealed more about American Jewish ideals than about Israeli realities. Contemporary criticisms of Israel, as I understand them, have far more to do with the shattering of these myths than with the "various traditions of opposition to Zionism" suggested in the symposium statement. A brief excursion back into history explains why.

In the early 19th century, American Jews depicted Israel as a "holy" land, a land where desperately poor and scrupulously faithful Jews engaged in prayer and study; a land, in short, where the material life, values, and practices of Jews were precisely the reverse of American Jews' own. Later in the century, alongside this image, a new one arose: the image of the bold desert pioneer, the hard-working agricultural colonist, the brawny Jewish farmer—the answer, in other words, to those who claimed that Jews were merely parasites, racially incapable of "productive" labor. Finally, in the 20th century, Zionists like Louis D. Brandeis added a further twist to this image: Israel became for them an extension of the American dream, a Jewish refuge where freedom, liberty, and social justice would reign supreme, an "outpost of democracy" that American Jews could legitimately, proudly, and patriotically champion.

All of these images, whatever truth they may have contained, took on mythic proportions in America. They embodied American Jews' hopes and fantasies, responded to their psychological and emotional needs, and helped them to counter the malicious slurs of their enemies. Many American Jews, especially after the creation of the state in 1948, began to look upon Israel as an embryonic heaven on earth. It became for them what the Soviet "socialist paradise" had been for some of their parents: a kind of Jewish utopia, a place where their fondest hopes and dreams might be realized.

The wonder is not so much that these dreams were eventually punctured as that they lasted as long as they did. Why they lasted, even in the face of countervailing realities, cannot be explored here; the point is that they persisted until quite recently. Now events have jarred American Jews out of their dream world, puncturing the various myths that I have described. In response, some have exchanged their utopian myths for demonic ones, an immature but hardly unprecedented response to disappointment. But for the most part, American Jewish criticism of the state of Israel does not seem to me (in the editors' words) to be "open," "widespread," and "bitter." Steven M. Cohen's 1986 *Survey of American Jewish Attitudes Toward Israel and Israelis* finds, to the contrary, that "most" American Jews continue to "proclaim a deep sentimental attachment to the country and a concern for its survival." Still, I would concede that American Jews are now both more critical of Israel than before and more willing to legitimate criticism of it. It is against this background that I respond to COMMENTARY's specific questions.

MY OWN attitudes toward Israel have indeed changed in recent years, for the very reasons that I have described. Having spent a recent sabbatical in Israel, and several summers there before that, I think I now have a far more realistic picture of the country and its problems than I once did. Rather than projecting my own hopes and fantasies onto Israel, I now see it as it is: a young, developing, and internally divided state

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beset by serious social, religious, political, and economic problems. Some of these problems are not being addressed at all; others, in my opinion, are being addressed poorly. I see Israel standing at a critical historical junction, and I am far from certain that it will follow what I consider to be the right path.

But whatever path Israel follows, I must emphasize that my attachments to it will remain unchanged, for they are basically familial ones. Israelis, indeed a whole range of Israelis, form part of my *mishpoche*, literally and figuratively. I may not always agree with them, but I do always love them.

As I INDICATED, many of the hopes and dreams of Israel's supporters appear to me to have been unrealistic and utopian—no more realizable than the starry-eyed visions some Jewish immigrants brought with them when they sailed into Ellis Island. Such dreams, in the final analysis, tell us far more about those who do the dreaming than those who are dreamed-about. Disappointments could have been anticipated. Having said this, one should by no means overlook Israel's astonishing accomplishments. Somehow, despite all the many problems that we may now acknowledge, its cities boom and its deserts bloom. One need only visit Israel's neighbors, say Egypt or Lebanon, to realize how remarkable the Zionist achievement has been.

To my mind, the more important question is not whether Israel has fulfilled or disappointed *our* hopes, but whether it has fulfilled its own. The state of Israel, according to its 1948 Declaration of Independence, ". . . will be based on freedom, justice, and peace as envisaged by the prophets of Israel; it will ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race, or sex; [and] it will guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, language, education, and culture." These goals, as anyone who has ever lived in Israel knows, have yet to be met. Some of Israel's leaders seem quite determined to make sure that they never will be.

IN TRYING to evaluate recent criticisms of Israel by American Jews, I have been greatly influenced by the words of Rabbi Jonathan in the talmudic tractate of Tamid (28a): "He who reproves his neighbor with pure intent ['in the name of heaven'] is worthy of a portion from God." Criticism, Rabbi Jonathan implies, must be carefully evaluated: much depends on the motives of the critic.

The unworthy critics today are easy to find: their shrill voices are neither moderated by love nor tinged with sadness. The worthy critics are more scarce. Alive to Israel as it really is, their words mingle praise and reproof. They speak softly, almost fearfully, and always in pain. In this, Israel's fortieth year, I shall strain my ears to hear them better.

JONATHAN D. SARNA *is associate professor of American Jewish history at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion and is director of its Center for the Study of the American Jewish Experience. His most recent book is* The American Jewish Experience (*Holmes & Meier*).

Peter Shaw: COMMENTARY'S first question prompts a recognition that I have experienced a diminution of dread over Israel's survival, as well as a diminution of distress over developments that cause Israel adverse publicity. Israel's military strength and favorable developments in the Arab world seem to point the way to survival. The Arab states seek unity to heal the rifts brought about by the Iran-Iraq war, but their restoration of relations with Egypt appears to signal not the old resolve to destroy Israel, but a promising acceptance of the one state among them to have signed a peace treaty with Israel. The recent demonstrations and riots in Gaza and the West Bank have brought the Palestinian question to the fore as Israel's greatest problem. On the other hand, though it is said that the growing Israeli Arab population threatens the continuance of a Jewish state, the two populations have remained stable relative to one another and there is reason to believe that they will continue to do so.

Adverse publicity about Israel in America has been largely offset by a significant change in the terms of discussion. Thanks to an emphasis on the argument that Israel is America's one dependable ally in the Middle East, Israel is no longer the ward whose protection was urged on Americans as a moral responsibility. From this point of view, Israel's involvement in the Iran-*contra* arms deal showed it to be the one country America could turn to for guidance through the maze of Middle Eastern intrigue. And if Israel failed, it was because of a similar lack of affinity for the game. More than ever, therefore, American public opinion views Israel not only as an ally but as an outpost of its own civilization. In this light even the killings at Sabra and Shatila, misreported as they were so as to cast a portion of the guilt on Israel, may not have hurt it in the long run. For in the context of subsequent Arab terrorism in Lebanon, the worst accusations against Israel appeared as possible temporary exceptions on Israel's part to the norms of Western behavior, in contrast to a rule of terroristic behavior on the part of the Arabs. Thus the American press, by worrying over Israeli morality while accepting Arab brutalities as givens, left a more favorable

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impression of Israel than many of its members intended.

From the millennialist point of view, Israel has undoubtedly disappointed the high hopes vested in it, not only in Lebanon but more recently in the Pollard spy affair. But here again the loss of high moral status attendant on taking a hard-headed military action, and being mistrustful and perhaps overly self-protective in spying on an ally, have also had beneficial as well as negative effects. Both incidents tended to transform the country from a morally wearying special case to an ordinary member of the comity of (imperfect) nations. In a similar way, the length of the dispute over Israeli territory has presented a parallel with challenges to their sovereignty sustained by other nations. It may be that every nation in the world contains territory once taken by force and still claimed by the defeated—as, for example, American Indian lands. At one or another level of consciousness, all the world knows that no nation can fully justify either its sovereignty or all of its past actions. Israel has been singular in having been founded in equity and the nearly universal will of all nations. But now, having shouldered the inevitable guilts of nationhood, it has in effect finally joined the club of nations.

Sigmund Freud thought that the source of anti-Semitism lay in the Jews' refusal to acknowledge guilt as part of their religion. There lay a primal crime somewhere in man's prehistory, he believed. Christianity had found a way of expiating this crime through the doctrine of original sin. Christianity's charge that the Jews killed God was partly an expression of resentment at the absence of a similar confession of guilt in Judaism. Freud evidently aimed to help free the Jews from anti-Semitism by persuading them to accept a comparable original sin: the killing of Moses (which Freud conjectured). Israel may be said to have had a status among the nations similar to that of the Jews among the Christians: it could regard its founding as innocent where they could not so regard their own. Now events, combined with biased reporting, seem to have given Israel a perhaps necessary modicum of guilt as a nation.

THE diminished regard for Israel on the part of American Jews who profess themselves dismayed by its human imperfections seems less a revival of the old traditions of opposition than part of a concurrent decline in regard for American and Western values. The canard that Israel acts as an outpost of Western imperialism actually touches on its genuine role as a transmitter of those values. Until there comes a frank renewal of regard for them, therefore, attitudes toward Israel will continue to be at best vitiated. It is in this sense that the fate of Israel is linked to America. For allegiance to America proves to be a prerequisite to support for Israel, a country that resembles it in fundamental ways—not the least of which is the shared experience of going from a millennial outlook while a young nation to a less fervent and self-congratulatory, albeit still idealistic, national maturity. Oddly enough, then, one feels about the growing criticism of Israel by American Jews that it represents more of a problem for them as Americans than it does a threat to Israel.

PETER SHAW *is the author of* The Character of John Adams *and* American Patriots and the Rituals of Revolution.

David Sidorsky: The variety and intensity of the criticisms of Israel suggest that they are of several types: one type, apparently motivated by geopolitical ambitions, is a calculated attempt to delegitimate Israel and erode its political support. Another, apparently motivated by moral expectations, is directed at improving the character of the Israeli state and society.

The geopolitical criticism dates from the Soviet Union's decision in 1954 to shift its strategy of penetration in the Middle East away from support of Israel to political backing and arms supply for Israel's adversaries, especially Egypt, Syria, and Iraq. As part of that shift, two themes emerged in Soviet propaganda.

The first was that Israel had been misperceived as vulnerable; it should truly be seen as a powerful instrumentality of an imperial Western outreach. The image, sketched in bold relief after the defeat of the Arab aggression of 1967, was of an aggressor Goliath against Third World victims.

The second theme of Soviet propaganda was that the view of Israel as a democratic, even pioneering, "socialist" country was outmoded. In corrected perspective, Israel was a neocolonial outpost, and hence a tool of repression against a Third World people. This portrait was accentuated in the 1960's with the adoption of the new persona of "the Palestinians."

Although at first these themes were confined to the Soviet press and forums of the far Left, they subsequently became the accepted truth of the United Nations. And after 1967, they gained currency in the media of Western Europe. More recently, they have become a focus for American discussions of Israel and have found a political base in the left wing of the Democratic party (at present, even in the spotlight of electoral politics, anti-Israel views can be expressed in the Democratic party political process, as long as they are joined by an explicit disavowal of anti-Semitism). These two themes have helped to define the vocabulary and to set the agenda of Western political discussion on the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The genesis and goals of the second species of

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criticism are very different. The genre of Diaspora criticism, developed from classic Zionist paradigms of almost a century ago, is directed toward improving the society of the land of Israel, and there is usually an objective basis and a measure of validity for each of the criticisms. Among most of these critics there is as well support for Israel's security interests and an awareness of the Arab threat.

Some groups who appreciate Israel's desire for peace have urged that unilateral Israeli initiatives toward one or another of the coalition of Arab belligerents could be a means of inducing negotiations. This shifts the focus of the agenda, however, away from the continuing Soviet escalation of the level of Arab arms supply or the persistent Arab refusal to recognize and negotiate with Israel toward a debate on Israel's responsibility for new initiatives. One result of such a debate is to reinforce the image of Israel as a new Goliath.

Similarly, groups concerned about the future of Israeli democracy have argued that there is a negative impact on that democracy in the need for long-term administration of the Arab populations of the districts of Gaza, Judea, and Samaria. This concern has bred the hope that Israeli moves toward unilateral withdrawal could catalyze a negotiating process. Yet to focus the agenda of Arab-Israeli peace negotiations on an Israeli change of policy on withdrawal can also serve to project the image of Israel as repressive colonial power.

Thus, those who would pursue, in the name of peace and democracy, criticism of Israel's security policies must bear responsibility for the way in which their views will be interpreted in the current climate of opinion that is prejudiced against Israel.

In a general inventory of Diaspora criticism of Israel two facts seem striking. One is the asymmetry of the criticism and the other is its incredibly high decibel count.

Virtually all of the advocacy for change in Israeli security policy is in the direction of greater concession. Yet there is a body of evidence that suggests that the Israeli leadership, in its desire for acceptance in the region, has not been sufficiently strong in its insistence that costly victories in the field of battle earn a diplomatic payoff in peace. The recurrent pattern has been for Israel to accept a cease-fire or truce at the point of Arab military defeat, which is then followed by an interim of "no war and no peace" in which the Arabs reserve the right to initiate the next round. For example, four Israeli victories against Egypt were stopped at predetermined lines, and were followed by Egyptian resumption of hostilities. Only the continued drive after the proposed cease-fire to a point just sixty miles from Cairo concentrated the minds of the Egyptian military sufficiently to move them beyond armistice to peace.

It is often stated that the volume of the criticism is justified by the great expectations legitimately demanded of Israel. Yet there is evidence of an escalation, if not inflation, of expectations. For example, I recall vividly the kind of expectations for the new state voiced in the visitors' gallery at Lake Success where I sat during the roll-call vote for the partition plan on November 29, 1947. The expectations expressed, in a moment of great optimism, fell far short of the accomplishments of the ensuing forty years in most of the areas of demographic, political, economic, and social affairs.

My own attitudes to Israel have never been determined, however, by the ways in which it fulfilled any set of expectations, whether religious, ideological, or political, but derive from my sense of its people. The Jewish community of Israel is made up of persons who have endured many vicissitudes and retain great potential for individual expression. They have demonstrated their capacity and will to protect their society. They have also shown their hunger for peace, probably excessively, to the point of signaling vulnerability to a potential enemy. They have developed the juridical institutions that safeguard free expression and the democratic mechanisms for arriving at consent of the governed on the major issues of their polity.

So, as a society, they would appear to have at the least merited a right of democratic autonomy in their quest for security. Actually, my recent concern has not been about these contested issues of life and liberty, but about exploring some of the ways in which the focus might shift to the neglected issues of the individual pursuit of happiness.

David Sidorsky *is professor of philosophy at Columbia University. Among his recent writings are "Contextualism, Pluralism, and Distributive Justice" in* Social Philosophy and Policy *and "Modernism and the Emancipation of Literature from Morality" in* New Literary History.

Seymour Siegel: The founding of the state of Israel in 1948 was a transcendently great event in Jewish history, but held within it grave and serious problems. It is these problems which are coming to the fore as Israel reaches the end of its fourth decade.

The main problem revolves around the messianic (utopian) character of the state of Israel. Messianism has been a constant companion of Jewish thought at least since the appearance of the false messiah, Sabbatai Zevi. False messianism portends a grave danger to the body politic of the Jewish people because it promises more than it can deliver—and convinces the people that fulfillment is at hand when it is out of reach. The establishment of the state of Israel is certainly

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part of the promised redemption but it is far away from the full redemption.

A premature messianism seems to be at the root of our problem with the state of Israel. It is true, of course, as Arthur Hertzberg and others have pointed out, that the impulse for Zionism came from the messianic fervor which had been pent up since the Sabbatean debacle. The yearning for redemption grows greater with the difficulties which the real world presents. Zionism saw itself first as secular messianism. It would bring about the redemption of the Jews by secular, political means. It would release the power accumulating within the Jewish soul by giving it a focus and a goal without having to wait for divine intervention. Zionism used the language of faith—but filled the old bottles with new wine. This had far-reaching and dramatic effects.

We can be thankful for the Zionist heresy. It saved the Jewish body and the Jewish soul. It made possible Jewish autonomy and Jewish creativity. But it did not bring redemption. It cannot bring full redemption through secular means. Israel can bring a *yeshuah* (a rescue and a victory) but not a *geulah* (a redemption). The state of Israel represents the reentry of the Jewish people into history. It is the expression of the secularization of Jewish interests. It represents a benign heresy. As such it should be welcomed. But it becomes dangerous when it assumes messianic pretensions. These pretensions are expressed in the idea that the Israeli state embodies the ideal state envisioned by the Prophets and sages. That is, of course, not true.

The Talmud explains that when the messiah comes there will be full and complete peace in the world, the nations will live in harmony. It is clear that we have not yet reached that end.

SEYMOUR SIEGEL *is Ralph Simon Professor of Ethics and Theology at the Jewish Theological Seminary and a member of the editorial board of* This World.

David Singer: As a modern Orthodox Jew and a religious Zionist, I find myself in the happy position of experiencing undiminished enthusiasm for Israel. Still more: my appreciation of the Jewish state and what it represents has actually grown over time. For me, personally, Israel is, in the words of the prayer of the chief rabbinate, the "first flowering of the promised redemption"; for the Jewish people, generally, it is the great engine which powers contemporary Jewish life, giving it its dynamic quality. Make no mistake about it: even the critics of Israel—I refer to the respectable critics within the American Jewish community—have drawn upon Israel's animating power.

I see myself as belonging to the luckiest generation in Jewish history. My father was born in interwar Poland and had his whole family destroyed by the Nazis. I, in contrast, grew up with Israel as a given—given, that is, after a hiatus of two millennia!—reality of Jewish life. All the longing for the restoration of Jewish sovereignty that fills the Jewish prayer book presents itself to me as an accomplished fact of everyday Jewish existence. What was once a vision accessible only through eyes of faith has now become the view from the window of an El Al plane. How Jews in the past found the courage to go on, I do not know, but they certainly would have envied me in being able to offer up, thrice daily, prayers that have already been answered—"Sound the great horn for our freedom"; "Return in memory to Your city Jerusalem . . . rebuild it soon in our days."

Needless to say, I would be delighted if more Jews shared my religious appreciation of the reborn Jewish state. But even in its raw secular form Israel is something extraordinary, a Jewish and human achievement of the first order. Just ask the Ethiopian Jews, they will tell you. They will tell you what it means to have the elements of Jewish sovereignty: a Jewish land of refuge; a Jewish passport; Jewish pilots and planes; and—most importantly—a Jewish government that cares. Were it not for Israel—only Israel—the Ethiopian Jews would be long gone. It does not really matter—I am setting aside here the issue of *aliyah*—how many Jews actually come to Israel. What is important is that every Jew living today carries the awareness that if anti-Semitism rears its ugly head, Israel is always there—it exists and its doors are wide open. Israel, so to speak, is the ace-in-the-hole of contemporary Jews.

Israel has done more than add to the Jews' sense of physical security. It has radically altered the Jewish psyche, giving Jews in the Diaspora a self-confidence and élan unknown, indeed inconceivable, in the past. Not only have Diaspora Jews taken pride in the gutsy determination of the Israelis, they have actually begun to show some of that determination themselves. In this sense, then, Zionist "normalization" has been a great triumph. Think of the aggressive way in which American Jews defend Israel's interests in the political sphere; think of the assertiveness of American Jews vis-à-vis the Reagan administration in the Bitburg affair; think of the willingness of American Jews to take on the Pope over his meeting with Kurt Waldheim; think of the ease with which American Jews went into the streets to confront Gorbachev in Washington—all this has been made possible by the example of Israel. The new activist thrust of American Jewry offers eloquent testimony to what Israel has done for Jewish morale.

WHICH brings me to the Israel-bashing that is currently in vogue in American Jewish life. To the degree that it is rooted in the various anti-Zionist tendencies mentioned in the opening statement of

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the symposium, it deserves to be opposed in the strongest possible manner. But anti-Zionism, clearly, is not what motivates mainstream Jews, i.e., those who move in the orbit of established Jewish organizations, and it is their growing impatience with Israel that calls for an explanation. Of course, one can point to specific irritants such as the Pollard affair, the "Who is a Jew?" controversy, Israel-South Africa ties, etc. But all this, taken together, I would contend, cannot account for the relish with which some mainstream Jews go after Israel today, and why, moreover, they insist on doing so publicly. Let me offer a hypothesis: it is because they cannot bring themselves to acknowledge what Israel has meant in their lives. (The Israeli counterpart to this is the resentment felt at being financially dependent on the largesse of American Jews.) Having achieved an extraordinary degree of self-confidence precisely because of the impact of Israel, these mainstream types now wish to convince themselves that they are self-made Jews, fully capable of functioning without the continuing influence of the Jewish state. Hence the insistence that American Jewry has entered upon a golden age; hence the repeated assertion that American Jews can, if necessary, go it alone. What better way to declare one's Jewish independence than by publicly putting down Israel?

One has to be patient in this situation, since it is not open to the quick fix. While gratitude is always in order, it is not really surprising that Israel-American Jewish relations have entered upon a troubled phase. All relationships have their ups and downs and require time to work themselves out in a satisfactory way. Israel, let us remember, is only just reaching its fortieth birthday. All I can say is this: happy is the generation—my generation—which has the problem of learning how to come to terms with the reality of Jewish statehood.

DAVID SINGER *is director of Information and Research Services of the American Jewish Committee and editor of the* American Jewish Year Book.

Max Singer: I have become increasingly committed to Israel in recent years, primarily because of personal reasons, but also because of my increasing appreciation of the extent to which Israel is being harmed and endangered by the same intellectual and political currents that are hurting and endangering the United States.

Israel cannot have failed to fulfill the hopes vested in it because Israel has just begun. There is no reason to deny Israel's weaknesses and defects, but they are agenda items to work on, not evidence of Israel's failure.

If the question is turned slightly to ask for a scorecard on progress to date, my summary would be: much has been accomplished in a short time; much more needs to be done; and we have to hurry. Israel's future depends on its rabbis rising to Judaism's needs with the brilliance and bravery that have been shown by Israeli generals. (Of course, rabbis, like generals, depend on the quality of the people they lead.)

There are a number of things that need to be said about the upsurge of Jewish criticism of Israel—some of which I believe is unhealthy, dangerous, and portends an increasing schism between a major sector of the Jewish elite and the main body of the Jewish community both in Israel and in the United States.

We must recognize that there is much in Israel that needs to be criticized, that criticism is necessary for improvement, and that criticism often comes from devotion. Unfortunately there are other kinds of criticism, too.

THE disturbing part of the criticism of Israel is that much of it has become an attack on, or a rejection of, the moral foundation of the state. Three comments should be made about the increase in this kind of "criticism"—which I regard as completely unjustified and misguided.

The first is to suggest that the American Jewish community is divided into two groups which need to be considered separately because they are part of separate patterns of influence and thinking. In my recent book, *Passage to a Human World*, I put forward the hypothesis that to understand American opinion one must look at both ordinary Americans and at a distinct category of about 10 percent of the population which I called "university-oriented Americans." Perhaps I am too enamored of my own hypothesis, but it seems to me that American Jews are probably divided in somewhat the same way that other Americans are—although presumably a much higher percentage of Jews are "university-oriented."

In brief, I suspect that the sniping at Israel's moral position comes primarily from a special minority, and that the majority of Jews continue to be overwhelmingly supportive of Israel and not significantly more critical than they were five or ten years ago. (The poll data reported several years ago in COMMENTARY showing continued broad Jewish support for Israel tend to support this suspicion.)

Saying that the increasing lack of respect for Israel comes from a minority does not at all imply that it is not important. Understanding the split in our community does not give us any basis for dismissing the importance of the criticism and of the bitter feelings that we hear expressed.

The second thing to note about the changing tone of some American Jewish discussion of Israel is that it is paralleled by a similar, more frightening, development in Israel. Much of mainstream intellectual opinion in Israel today expresses a

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revulsion against Israel, a rejection of its moral underpinnings, and more respect for its enemies than for its own people.

I am not talking about normal political debate or about artistic attacks on particular political ideas or policies. The Israeli literary community is producing bitter and nasty attacks on the society itself and on Israel's fundamental moral character. For example, an article in a major Israeli newspaper compared Natan Shcharansky to Udi Adiv—an Israeli who had just been released from prison after serving a long term for participation in Syrian espionage against Israel—as if Israel's criminal courts were like the Soviets' and Adiv's crime were like Shcharansky's "crime."

The writers who express such feelings are honored and rewarded by the literary community and by the broader elite that is the primary audience for new art and literature. Writers who speak against extreme or unfair criticism of Israel, or against uncritical adulation of the PLO, are attacked and repudiated by the community.

The third point is that much of the increased criticism of Israel reflects approaches and attitudes that are equally critical of the United States. Most importantly this is true of the basic view of international politics.

There is reason to doubt that Israel and the American Jewish community can long live with a division as deep as may now be developing between the moral and political sensibilities of a significant portion of their elites and those of their majorities. I believe that we will overcome this condition in one of two ways. It is more likely that the elites will look over the edge and pull back to a position that is at least reasonable and responsible enough to prevent them from becoming totally unacceptable to the larger community.

The alternative is that the minority will become increasingly bitter until it is rejected by the community and a new leadership develops, primarily at the political level, but also socially and artistically. I don't believe that anything like this has ever happened before. But neither has there ever before been a society in which the great majority of the people are modern, literate, and wealthy by historic standards. Nobody can predict how such a change in the leadership class could work—but it won't be an easy or pleasant process, however necessary it might become.

MAX SINGER *is president of the Potomac Organization. His* Passage to a Human World *has just been published by the Hudson Institute.*

Steven L. Spiegel: It may be surprising but it is also understandable that criticism of Israel is increasing among American Jews. In the decade after the Six-Day War, the Jewish state was still basking in the halo of a victory perceived as miraculous. Even after 1973, when the energy crisis and intensified attention to the Palestinian issue created worldwide diplomatic and military pressures in which the U.S. government also participated, and indeed even after the Likud victory in 1977, most activist American Jews devoted their energies to fighting for aid for Israel and against harmful diplomatic initiatives and arms sales to the Arabs.

Today the political scene is transformed. A sympathetic President and Secretary of State have presided over a period of unprecedented official friendship toward Israel. There is not only an oil glut, but the Arabs appear weak and there is undisguised resentment in America over their past behavior, their failure to promote peace, and their sponsorship of terrorist activity. Most important, in the Middle East itself the Arab states are preoccupied with Iran.

In this altered environment, the costs of criticizing Israel have declined, but the incentives have increased. For some American Jewish leaders, the years they have spent dealing with the Israeli political system—its arcane bureaucratic structure and its convoluted nexus of personal fiefdoms and rewards—have gradually taken their toll.

In addition, for all Israel's successes, there has been an escalating series of failures: Lebanon, the economy, emigration, inter-ethnic relations, religious-secular tensions, the Lavi fiasco—not to mention the ongoing drain of the occupation. The current Israeli government has faced a succession of crises, of which Israel's role in Irangate and the Pollard affair are only the most visible.

The Pollard affair is especially important because it raises anew the question of the perspicacity of the current Israeli elite. Whereas other controversial Israeli actions in the last several years have largely taken place in the Middle East, an area where American Jewish leaders are properly accustomed to deferring to Israel, Pollard involved the United States; many American Jewish leaders were struck by the monumental stupidity of the initial action, as well as by the subsequent promotion to higher positions of those responsible for "running" Pollard.

ALL this helps explain why it is easier for Jews to criticize Israel today. But as one who also feels a certain disappointment over recent developments, I believe that the pendulum has already swung too far. Americans, Jews among them, are too prone to see issues in all-or-nothing form. After 1967, Israel could do no wrong; today, it sometimes seems, it can do no right. In focusing markedly on the failings, we forget that a vibrant democracy devoted to social justice has been created and sustained despite continual security threats and the influx of peoples from a variety of cultures. As Shlomo Avineri has recently pointed out, on the occasion of America's fortieth anni-

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versary in 1816, slavery still existed and the White House had been burned by the British only four years earlier. Israel's troubles in Lebanon and the West Bank are minor by comparison.

To be sure, if the pendulum has swung too far, Israelis have had a part in swinging it. For several years now both the Right and the Left in Israel have sought to strengthen their cause at home by fundraising and recruiting among American Jews. With the advent of the national unity government, this process has been universalized. When both parties seek support from American Jews for their contrasting approaches, the monopoly that Israeli leaders once had on definitions of their own national security is automatically destroyed. American Jews have been asked to become mediators rather than mere supporters; they have in part been coopted into the Israeli political process. Increased criticism is the inevitable result.

THE problem with this new vocal behavior on the part of American Jews is that the organized Jewish community is totally unprepared for the role it is being asked by some Israelis to assume or is now appointing itself to perform. (Indeed, there is no model in contemporary political theory for a community in one state to play an integral political function in another.) True, the focus of American Jewish life has been broadened in recent years: the communal organizations are no longer primarily devoted to charity; they now give unprecedented attention to American national politics and even to issues of national security. But this expanded function has not been matched by an adjustment to changed circumstances either in the form of engaged personnel or in new institutional arrangements.

American Jewish institutions thrive on a good fight—pressuring Congress, raising funds for a crisis, gaining support for a specific cause (e.g., Soviet Jewry). They are less effective, however, at devising long-range strategies that can be quickly adapted to meet new and unexpected crises or to counter unanticipated arguments. They are an even greater failure when it comes to developing detailed and sophisticated tactics for specific problems, or to dealing with issues that require specialized expert knowledge. Yet activism cannot replace substance; panaceas and slogans are not policies.

The tumult in the Jewish world may yet turn out well. The criticism of Israel could lead to greater engagement by American Jews in the economic, scientific, legal, medical, religious, educational, and business life of Israel. New contacts, new exchanges, new projects, new involvement by individuals could help Israel in the continual building of its society. Even without moving permanently to Israel, American Jews can reach a new level of involvement through joint ventures and sojourns in the Jewish state. The instrument of charity by which American Jews now largely relate to Israel could be converted into a healthier interaction based on mutual profit.

But no breakthroughs will be achieved if criticisms of Israel are not accompanied by an institutional and intellectual reform here in the United States. Such reform could stem the growing decline in Jewish communal leadership and organization. It could also lead to practical programs and to innovative mechanisms for turning current frustrations into productive channels of help. Otherwise, if criticism grows unchecked, it could begin to sap the faith of other Americans in a vibrant Israel. It is ironic that American Jewish criticism has prospered just as Americans in general have grown more appreciative of Israel's accomplishments and of its strategic value to the United States. Ironic, but not yet tragic.

STEVEN L. SPIEGEL *is professor of political science at UCLA. His recent books include* The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict *and* The Soviet-American Competition in the Middle East, *of which he is a co-editor.*

Roger Starr: Of course, some of my attitudes toward Israel have changed over the years; so have my attitudes toward many other contemporary nations. What has not changed is my certainty that for world Jewry there was no acceptable alternative to the establishment of a Jewish state in the Holy Land in 1947 in the aftermath of the Holocaust.

The major change in my attitude toward Israel is the sense that the development of a Jewish state is a far more complex undertaking than I had understood. I do not refer to foreseen economic difficulties or the unremitting opposition of the Arabs. I had not imagined that the depth of the differences among Jews on religious, cultural, and ideological grounds could be as great as they are now revealed to be. Nor did I imagine that demographers in my own lifetime would be establishing with confidence a date on which the non-Jewish population of the Jewish state will be greater than the Jewish population.

One merely repeats the obvious when one points out that a state in which the majority is non-Jewish cannot be a Jewish state. The bitter fight waged by the Orthodox communities to make the present state's secular laws conform to their interpretation of the religious law has been serious enough over the past forty years, a period during which their opponents acknowledged being, or (as the Orthodox might put it) claimed to be, Jewish. What then will be the nature of relations between the Orthodox community and the state when the majority is not Jewish at all? The best, it seems, that one can hope for is a democratic state with protection for its minorities, a state recognizing the group status of its ethnic com-

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munities. Will that make Israel a new Lebanon? What should be the relationship between American Jews and such a state, assuming that it does not meet Lebanon's fate so quickly that the speculation becomes unnecessary?

To the extent that it is possible to conceive of the Jews becoming once again a minority even in a state that was established by their own effort and blood, the attitude of Jews toward it cannot avoid changing. The shadow of this possibility has deepened the conflict between those groups of Jews who cannot accept the loss of a Jewish state and who will do whatever has to be done to postpone that eventuality, and those groups that believe that by improving Jewish manners and learning to turn the other cheek a plateau of accommodation will open for them in what was once Israel.

My answer, then, to your first question, is that my attitude has changed to the extent that I acknowledge that the choice Israeli Jews now face may be simply between a state able to sustain its Jewish identity only by domestic policies I would consider unacceptable in the United States, and a status as one of several ethnic communities in a federated state whose stability is highly questionable. That is not a choice I expected to face in 1947; and it is a great change that makes me willing to say that I support the Israelis who opt for the first alternative.

YOUR second question asks to what extent Israel has fulfilled the hopes vested in it. The question is, of course, asked in reverse. The question should be to what extent the world confronting Israel has fulfilled the hopes vested in *it*. I would answer: scarcely at all. When the United Nations voted that the British Mandate in Palestine would be succeeded by a partition of sovereignty between Arabs and Jews, the nations that had participated in the decision raised neither a voice nor a finger to help the state they had implicitly brought into existence. As a combatant in World War II, I had, foolishly it now appears, more hope for the world. Naturally, a state of Israel that was forced to defend its borders from military attack and guerrilla incursions, from verbal assault in the United Nations and harsh criticism even from those that had voted in that body in favor of its sovereignty, is bound to be different from a state at peace with its neighbors.

To describe the present hostility as grounds for disappointment in Israel is to ascribe to the Jewish state magical qualities. What is remarkable, though hardly magical, is the extent to which Israel has been able to absorb Jewish refugees even while defending itself, to develop its technologies, to expand its educational facilities, and to offer help to other nations seeking to develop their own economies. I can only describe as a bitter joke the lament of American Jews that Israel's trade with South Africa is a demonstration of the nation's unfortunate and, of course, voluntary, turn to racism. Among other things, those critics overlook the trade between South Africa and newly independent nations on that continent.

With all due respect to the religious and intellectual traditions of the Jewish people, nothing in their political history justifies the belief that as diplomats and statesmen they should have been able to conciliate the Arab world, propitiate the Soviet Union, reduce international dependence on Middle Eastern oil, and remove the religious tensions and dynastic rivalries that have made the area a hotbed of unrest for centuries.

I THINK the upsurge of Jewish criticism of Israel is both healthy and unhealthy. It is healthy to discuss the alternate courses of action, their dangers and potentialities, that might ensure the survival of a Jewish sovereignty in what was Palestine. But much of the criticism reflects a growing fear in the Diaspora that it is dangerous to support a nation that has become something of an embarrassment to "decent" people everywhere. In Israel, it represents a revival of political differences between those who believe that only a socially "progressive" government can create an atmosphere in which peace between Israelis and Arabs can be achieved and those who believe such a hope is delusive, enervating, and economically self-destructive. The youth of the country, weary of being asked once again to risk their lives in what is beginning to seem like endless war with an outcome that is at best dubious, listen to the debate and can hardly be blamed for wanting to believe that peace now is possible. Those who, like me, consider that survival after the Holocaust is Israel's sole moral obligation hope that the desire for peace will not overtake the long-range calculation of its durability, a calculation that seems as difficult for some Americans to make as it is for some Israelis.

ROGER STARR *is a member of the editorial board of the New York* Times *and the author of* The Rise and Fall of New York City, *among other books.*

Sol Stern: I have been an avid supporter of Israel ever since my first visit there in 1970. Admittedly this was a little late. Up to that time I was largely indifferent to Zionism, while many of my friends on the New Left were becoming increasingly hostile to Israel.

I was not won over because I "rediscovered" Judaism. Nor was it because I accepted the Zionist view that Israel was the only legitimate center of Jewish life and that the Jews living outside Israel were in *galut*. Rather, what moved me so deeply were the open and essentially democratic

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attitudes I encountered there in the midst of an endless war. I couldn't help comparing my experience of Israel with the revolutions my friends on the New Left and I had placed our hopes in—every one of which then turned into a bloody tyranny.

The Zionist revolution, it occurred to me, had resulted in one of this century's rare decent outcomes. A formerly despised and oppressed people not only improved their material conditions but at the same time also preserved their political freedoms. And Israel continued to serve as a needed haven for the Jews of distress in the Soviet Union, the Arab countries, and elsewhere. It was not the millennium but it was good enough. Certainly what was happening in Israel was more constructive than developments in any of the other "new nations" formed out of the post-colonial period.

Yet I never vested any cosmic "hopes" in Israel of the sort implied in the symposium's second question. For me Israel never had to achieve the promise of socialist Zionism or to resolve the Jewish problem. I merely accepted it as elemental that this decent society under siege merited the solidarity of Jews and democrats everywhere, that its defeat would be a moral and political catastrophe.

This came to me as an illumination of sorts during the Yom Kippur War, which I covered as a journalist. One day I stood on a balcony overlooking the Tel Aviv seashore and was able to see the giant military transport planes flying in the desperately needed equipment from America. I found myself cheering the U.S. military—an absolute first for me—and I have never since doubted the need for a strong U.S. defense policy.

I HAVE not changed those fundamental beliefs in the years since the Yom Kippur War, though many recent trends in Israel have disturbed me. I have written elsewhere that Israel has been the victim of an unfair but pervasive double standard, particularly in the media. Whereas virtually no standards at all are applied to Israel's enemies, much of the media has held Israel up to the standards of a democracy at peace. When Israel doesn't exactly meet these false standards we are then told that Israel has "lost its soul."

I don't believe that Israel has "lost its soul" just because the West Bank occupation is becoming morally and politically untenable. Yet I do worry that Israel has lost a great deal in the quality of its political leadership.

Zionism achieved national sovereignty, statehood, and a working democracy—all this so that the Jewish people (or at least part of it) could be responsible for their own historical destiny. There was no guarantee that these instruments of statecraft would always be used wisely. The stirrings among American Jews cited by COMMENTARY are partly an expression of weariness and trendy disaffection from an Israel becoming more problematic. But a lot of criticism also has to do with the question of the quality of political leadership in Jerusalem.

Consider just some of the devastating revelations that Israel's supporters in this country have had to deal with in recent years:

Israel's intelligence service recruited an American Jew to steal secrets from the American government and the Israeli government then got caught in a clumsy coverup of the case.

The Israeli government sold arms to the government of Iran as part of the paying of ransom for hostages and then was less than forthcoming about its role in the affair.

Israel's security services systematically tortured (and in two cases murdered) Palestinian detainees and then covered up this practice by offering perjured testimony in Israel's courts.

During this period Israel's government seemed beset by paralysis, headed by a prime minister and foreign minister who pursued two distinct foreign policies and hardly talked to each other. That government then alienated the largest branch of American Judaism by sponsoring legislation which would effectively have turned its adherents into second-class citizens in the Jewish state.

It seems to me that these specific actions taken in Jerusalem, not some generalized disaffection or the reemergence of old "anti-Zionist" ideologies, account for the anger and concern expressed by many American Jews. And who can fault them for that anger?

Indeed, had American Jews not spoken up about these political debacles it would have been confirmation of the canard propagated by Israel's enemies that the American Jewish community marches in lock-step with the government of Israel and then uses its influence to prevent rational public discussion of Israel's policies.

Israel continues to merit our solidarity, but it ought to be a thinking solidarity. Silence in the face of Israeli policies that are incomprehensible and self-destructive would not only be unseemly for American Jewry but very bad for Israel. Indeed, one of the reasons Israeli officials have done so many stupid things lately may be that they had begun to take America and American Jewry for granted.

So one can only hope that responsible Israeli leaders pay attention to some of the recent public criticism. Much of it, I believe, is legitimate and responsible, though inevitably it gets mixed up with the "Israel has lost its soul" variety. I certainly do not regard it as "dangerous," nor do I see any evidence that it has led to slippage in political support for Israel in America generally. (Of the twelve presidential candidates only Jesse Jackson has even suggested support for a Palestinian state.)

Depending on the quality of the ongoing dialogue with Israel's leaders, the more critical stance by American Jews could turn out to be very

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healthy indeed. Some good advice might be offered and heeded. In any event, it's what democracy is all about, and it has served Israel and the Jewish people well.

SOL STERN, *formerly an editor of* Ramparts, *has written about Israel for the* Village Voice, *the* New Republic, *and other periodicals. He is currently on the staff of the New York City Council President.*

Marie Syrkin: Though I share the dismay of many American Jews in regard to current trends in Israel, my basic attitude is unchanged. I see no contradiction in this statement. I still believe in the absolute, not relative, justice of Zionism as a solution to a wrong suffered uniquely by the Jewish people. I still believe that the revival of national independence in a notch of the historic homeland has done no violence to Arab nationalism as argued in 1917 and 1948; and I still believe that Herzl's naive vision of happy Arab-Jewish coexistence, as well as the theoretical socialist-Zionist program for Arab-Jewish cooperation in the reclamation of Palestine, affirmed a moral principle integral to a rational world order. That views such as I have just expressed sound like sentimental drooling indicts those who shattered generous hopes rather than those who held them.

The very question betrays the anomaly of the Jewish situation. No one assumes that Americans, Jewish or non-Jewish, will waver in their essential commitment to American democracy because of fallible government policies or external threats. Opinion polls question attitudes toward Reagan or Nicaragua, not the United States. That, save in periods of imminent catastrophe and despite the teachings of history and tradition, the instinct for the preservation of Jewish peoplehood has become fragile and volatile enough to warrant the query provides a partial explanation for any change in attitude toward Israel.

ISRAEL has fulfilled the chief hope vested in it beyond all reasonable expectation—this despite relentless aggression and immense problems of immigrant absorption. Jews forget all too easily how fundamentally Israel and the 1948 Law of Return transformed the status of all Jews. For the first time in modern history Jews had the luxury of choice and an advocate when choice was denied: persecuted Jews had a haven; "rootless cosmopolitans" could assert their identity; contented Western Jews could ponder alternatives. Refugees, from the 40's to present-day Ethiopians, attest to the change. The Jewish DP who told me with brutal simplicity, "They killed us because we had no land of our own," emphasized the meaning of national sovereignty on its most elementary level. I shall not recite the familiar litany of Israel's cultural and scientific achievements and its successful introduction of social forms like the kibbutz.

Israel's existence is the great historic plus; the minuses, however, cannot be ignored. Despite its brave pioneer beginnings, the creation of an egalitarian, cooperative society has been derailed. Though I acknowledge the errors of the Labor party when in power, I am alarmed by the espousal of the Likud program by half of Israel. The vision of a pluralist, secular, democratic society now competes with extremist chauvinism and pseudo-messianic bigotry. I appreciate the degree to which these developments are inevitable reactions to Arab enmity, terrorism, and international isolation. I blame a cynical world that with few exceptions abandoned Israel in every crisis, and I blame Western Jews like myself who shirked the historic chance of helping to shape Israel through *aliyah*. But when some Israeli action is on trial, I resent the demand, concurred in by many Jews, that Israel be judged by criteria applied to no other people. This Pyrrhic compliment masks covert discrimination whose practical results can be as harmful as overt attack. While a sneeze in Israel promptly alerts the keepers of the world's moral health, endemic plague throughout the Middle East or in Africa is complacently disregarded. At a time when the media were virulently excoriating Israel for a massacre perpetrated by Lebanese Christian Phalangists in Sabra and Shatila the press did not bother to note the massacre of over 20,000 Muslims by Syria in the town of Hama. Israel's assumption of indirect responsibility for the Lebanese outrage and its prosecution of Israeli commanders were taken for granted.

In a climate uncritically receptive to every Third World slogan, uninformed American Jews, to affirm their liberal credentials, distance themselves from the "colonial oppressor" they see depicted, Jewish leftists indefatigably mouth the party line, and the uncommitted excuse their growing alienation by Israel's supposed derelictions. But much of the upsurge in Jewish criticism comes from plain ignorance as well as the Jewish appetite for self-flagellation.

HAVING said this, I must stress that since Israel is today riven into two contending blocs, any American Jew concerned about the country's fate cannot remain a passive observer of policies affecting peace, religious tolerance, and political liberty. I cannot be indifferent to Meir Kahane or the excesses of fanatics in Jerusalem. Furthermore, I believe that the allotment of scarce funds for bedroom communities on the West Bank while settlements in Galilee are neglected is suicidal madness, and that the retention of occupied territories spells disaster.

Since I hold these views I should be remiss in

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responsible commitment were I not to support the programs of those Israeli parties I consider most likely to safeguard the future of Israel and its democratic character. There is nothing novel in this position. During the regime of the Labor government, emissaries of opposing factions did their vocal best to enlist disciples in the United States, and they were not shy of publicity. In the elections for the last Zionist Congress, each party —religious, Labor, Likud, and others—advertised its virtues and the demerits of its adversaries as loudly and openly as its funds allowed. I therefore cannot understand the condemnation of the American Jewish Congress and other organizations for their espousal of the peace conference proposed by the foreign minister of Israel. Would such endorsement have been proper some months earlier when Shimon Peres was prime minister? The failure of American Jews to join in a debate about not only an Israeli but also an American proposal would be an abdication of responsibility. Problems of peace are global in their import. How can normally articulate American Jews be muzzled in regard to questions of major policy? American Jews have never been automatons in their relationship with Israel. Were they to become so, that would spell the end of their vital partnership with Israel.

MARIE SYRKIN *has written extensively on Zionism and Jewish affairs. Her most recent book is* The State of the Jews *(New Republic Books).*

Ruth R. Wisse: Most Jewish criticism of the state of Israel is a reaction to anti-Zionism, the anti-Semitism of the late 20th century. As long as Arab states declared their opposition to Israel in belligerent terms, vowing to push the Jews into the sea, liberal sympathies were with the Jewish state. The extermination of the European Jews was still too fresh to admit another such proposal. But when the Arabs, following their unsuccessful war of 1967, accused the Jews of denying *them* their rightful place in the Middle East, they breathed new life into the still potent mythology of the immoral, conspiring Jew. The identification of Zionism as Jewish racism not only deflected criticism from Arab imperial ambitions, but defined the existence of Israel as a crime against the Palestinian Arabs. The prosecution of this charge over the past twenty years has attempted to invert the image of the Jew from European victim to Middle Eastern villain. Some Jews respond to this accusation of their villainy by blaming Israelis for having caused it.

Naturally, Jews who criticize the state of Israel do not feel that they are picking up the enemy's cues. They express their criticism in high-minded concern for Israel's moral health and physical safety. They congratulate themselves for the courage to "dissent" from the imagined unanimity of Jewish support for the Jewish state. But in fact, American Jews during the past twenty years have been unwilling to expose the Arab anti-Zionist campaign for what it is—the extension into the political sphere of the war against the Jewish state. They are reluctant to take the war of words into the Arab camp, challenging Arab rulers to resettle Arab refugees, to accept the idea of regional pluralism, to confront their own racial intolerance. Since the Jews want nothing—beyond acceptance—from the Arabs, they are afraid of adding to the cycle of aggression, and hope that the hostility toward them will disappear if ignored. Unfortunately, recent Jewish history offers the best evidence that anti-Jewish hatred feeds in part on Jewish unwillingness to acknowledge it.

The growing disaffection of American Jews from Israel follows a general law of modern Jewish politics: intra-Jewish argument rises in proportion to anti-Jewish aggressivity, particularly from sources deemed to be progressive. Anti-Zionism was loudest within the American Jewish community at the height of the Communist campaign against Jewish nationalism in the 1930's. Jewish criticism of Israel has similarly increased at the same rate as left-wing anti-Zionist propaganda. The disinclination of Jews to counter the Arab denial of their national legitimacy means that they must move ever more to the defensive. Thus *Tikkun*, the first American Jewish magazine to revive the old Jewish agenda of the 1930's (as the new Jewish agenda) and to argue the Palestinian case *within* the Jewish community, was founded, predictably, in California, where anti-Israel propaganda is most sustained.

MY ATTITUDES to Israel have indeed changed in recent years. I would not have believed that any people could maintain such civilized self-discipline in the face of continuing hostile provocation. I am grateful to an Israel which, by defeating Soviet client states in successive wars (though this was neither its purpose nor concern), did more to extend the hopes of democracy than countries many times its size and strength. I am moved by the reality of ingathered Jews—with all its predictable social unrest—more than by the rhetoric of the old songs of *aliyah*. My great disappointment is in the Arabs, among whom one would have expected more of Sadat's caliber of statesmanship, more brotherly concern for at least their own people, if not for their fellow Semites.

RUTH R. WISSE, *professor of Yiddish literature at McGill University, is co-editor (with Irving Howe and Khone Shmeruk) of the recently published* Penguin Book of Modern Yiddish Verse *(Viking).*

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Books in Review

The Fire This Time

THE BONFIRE OF THE VANITIES. By TOM WOLFE. *Farrar Straus & Giroux. 659 pp. $19.95.*

Reviewed by KENNETH S. LYNN

WHAT happens when one of the kings of the New Journalism, who throughout his career has employed fictional techniques in his reportage, decides to write a novel? In Tom Wolfe's *The Bonfire of the Vanities* we have an answer to that question. A journalist first and last, Wolfe has scorned the solipsistic assumptions of most of his American fiction-writing contemporaries and —with etymological warrant—has grounded his novel in the news (*les nouvelles*).

Wolfe's dramatization of the tensions of life in New York City in the 1980's is, to a degree, excruciatingly believable. His notations of different patterns of speech and habits of dress, of the latest fashions in food and interior decoration, and of the sorts of names favored by rock bands (the Pus Casserole) and political protest groups (the Gay Fist Strike Force) are hilariously acute. His evocations of a wide variety of scenes, from the asphalt, concrete, and cinders strewn across the hills and dales of the southeast Bronx in a ghastly yellow gloaming to the bond-trading room of the investment firm of Pierce & Pierce on lower Wall Street, where young Ivy Leaguers roar like wild animals and by 8:30 A.M. have dark half-moons under their armpits, likewise possess an indisputable authenticity.

The novel's panoramic reach considerably exceeds its grasp, however. Not only are the characters types, rather than individuals, but they do not compare in interest with the real people Wolfe has etched in acid in his essays. Owing to the author's lack of literary inventiveness, many of the episodes are boringly predictable, and, as Michael Dolan has demonstrated in a searching review in the Washington, D.C., *City Paper*, a number of colorful phrases in the book have been cannibalized from Wolfe's earlier writings. Worse than all these disappointments, though, are the plot's departures from plausibility at certain critical junctures.

Such flights of fancy would be forgivable if the novel were simply a satire. But a Dreiserian terror drenches the best chapters in this novel, and it constitutes an even stronger sign than documentary gravity of Wolfe's contradictory ambitions. For all of his desire to push facts to their comic extremes, the author of *The Right Stuff* (Wolfe's book about the test pilots who form the backbone of America's space-flight program) also wants us to accept *The Bonfire* as a naturalistic account—as a chronicle, in the words of the flap copy on the dust jacket, of "the way we live in America."

In the wild and whirling prologue we are brought face to face with urban chaos. At a public meeting in Harlem, the mayor of New York, unnamed but revealingly given to Kochian locutions ("Okay? I'll give you the actual figures. Okay?"), is being shouted down with anti-Semitic epithets ("Yo, Goldberg! Yo, Hymie!") by the followers of a manipulative black religionist and street socialist known as Reverend Bacon. The TV crews in attendance, their cameras coming out of their heads like horns, are diabolically delighted by the spectacle, as the mental processes of the mayor immediately recognize: "They're eating it up! They're here for the brawl! . . . They're cowards! Parasites! The lice of public life!"

Despite the accents of self-pity, the mayor is speaking for Wolfe. A bitter view of the tyranny of journalism over our right to privacy as well as our politics, and of the affluence and celebrity attainable by untalented hacks, is powerfully sustained to the end of *The Bonfire*. The life of Wolfe's thirty-eight-year-old protagonist, the imperious but hardly evil Sherman McCoy, becomes a hell as a result of the media's vile eagerness to destroy respectable reputations, while the sleaziest character in the book, an alcoholic, meal-cadging Englishman, Peter Fallow, who despite his encyclopedic ignorance of the United States is a reporter for a New York tabloid owned by the fabulously wealthy Sir Gerald Steiner, wins not only a Pulitzer Prize for the revelations about McCoy passed to him by others, but the hand of Sir Gerald's daughter as well.

If, however, the harassed mayor of New York knows how he feels about those TV crews, his assessment of his black hecklers wanders between two worlds. On the one hand, he sees them as the curling lip of a multi-racial, multi-ethnic tidal wave of the disadvantaged, in which the varied elements of the city's historic stability are fated to drown if they have not done so already. "Come down from your swell co-ops, you general partners and merger lawyers!" the mayor internally soliloquizes as the blacks in the audience in front of him begin to jump up and down and shake their fists and scream:

> It's the Third World down there! Puerto Ricans, West Indians, Haitians, Dominicans, Cubans, Colombians, Hondurans, Koreans, Chinese, Thais, Vietnamese, Ecuadorians, Panamanians, Filipinos, Albanians, Senegalese, and Afro-Americans! Go visit the frontiers, you gutless wonders! . . . You poor fatties! You marshmallows! Hens! Cows! You wait'll you have a Reverend Bacon for a mayor, and a City Council and a Board of Estimate with a bunch of Reverend Bacons from one end of the chamber to the other!

Yet in the very midst of imagining the day when Reverend Bacon and company will show their faces at 60 Wall and Number One Chase Manhattan Plaza to dust out the safe-deposit boxes, the mayor sud-

KENNETH S. LYNN's Hemingway *was awarded the Los Angeles* Times *prize for the best biography of 1987.*

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denly repudiates his entire prophecy as pathological. "Completely crazy, these things roaring through his head! Absolutely paranoid! Nobody's going to elect Bacon to anything. Nobody's going to march downtown." What are the second thoughts that bring the mayor to his senses? The prologue fails to furnish an answer to this question, and the omission is significant. For His Honor's feverish initial judgment of New York's future is destined to be elaborated upon in the novel proper.

EVEN though the story of Sherman McCoy is unsatisfyingly fantastic in the last analysis, it begins realistically enough—indeed, quite brilliantly so. With his income of a million dollars a year, a fourteen-room apartment on Park Avenue, a fashionably thin wife who dabbles in interior decorating, a beautiful six-year-old daughter, and a long-legged, sprocket-hipped young mistress named Maria, McCoy carries his "Yale chin" at a cocky angle and thinks of himself as a "Master of the Universe"—but not for long. In the twilight of a late-summer day, as he is bringing Maria and her multitudinous luggage back from Kennedy Airport in his $48,000 Mercedes sports roadster, he misses the ramp for Manhattan on the Triborough Bridge, turns off instead at East 138th, and promptly gets lost in the darkest Bronx. The further he proceeds, the more alarming the street scenes become.

Among the emotions which most Americans share but hesitate to acknowledge in public discourse is the fear of losing one's way in a city at night and ending up in a totally unfamiliar slum neighborhood. If there is anything about *The Bonfire* that an amateur sociologist can be sure of, as he contemplates its impressive sales, it is that its readers unanimously identify with the situation of McCoy and Maria in the roadster. The onomatopoeic interpolations and parenthetical ejaculations that have long been Wolfe's stylistic signature serve him superbly well as he tracks the curve of McCoy's and Maria's feelings from a vague abysmal uneasiness to a barely controlled panic. Finally, Maria spots a ramp that promises to lead them back to safety, except that the incline is blocked by an old tire. McCoy gets out of the car, picks up the tire, and sees two black men—both of them young, one of them heavily muscled and big—coming toward him.

At which point there ensues a stunning sequence of actions and reactions culminating in unintended homicidal violence. As a lesson in deterministic irony, the sequence bears comparison with the scene in the rowboat on Big Bittern Lake in Dreiser's *An American Tragedy*, wherein Clyde Griffiths's pregnant girlfriend, Roberta Alden, whom Clyde desperately wants to get rid of but can't bring himself, in the moment of truth, to kill, accidentally falls in the water and drowns, while Clyde does nothing to save her. Breathing in huge gulps "as if she were drowning," Maria in *The Bonfire* clambers behind the wheel of the Mercedes and Sherman jumps in beside her; she slams the car into first gear as he yells, "Look out!"

> The big one was coming toward the car. He had the tire up over his head. Maria squealed the car forward, right at him. He lurched out of the way . . . a blur . . . a terrific jolt. . . . The tire hit the windshield and bounced off, without breaking the glass. . . . The Krauts! . . . Maria cut the wheel to the left, to keep from hitting the cans. . . . The skinny one standing right there. The rear end fishtailed . . . *thok*! . . . The skinny boy was no longer standing. . . . Maria fought the steering wheel. . . . A clear shot between the guardrail and the trash cans. . . . She floored it. . . . A furious squeal. . . . The Mercedes shot up the ramp. . . .

There but for the grace of God go we. McCoy and Maria's crime of hit-and-run is an event we can so fully believe in that it's difficult to imagine we would have acted differently.

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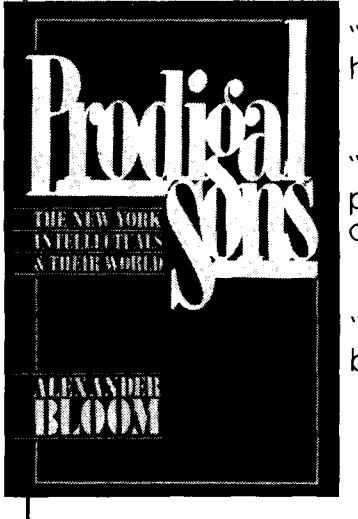

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But from the moment the lovers reach the nest she maintains in Manhattan—for Maria, too, is married and must conduct her romances clandestinely—and McCoy allows her to talk him out of his automatic impulse to report what happened to the police, the story begins to place a strain on our credulity. In Dreiser's novels, one never doubts that individual lives are the playthings of large forces. But even though there is a Dreiserian quality in the ensuing account of McCoy's humiliation, as he is stripped of every shred of his honor and dignity and loses his touch as a bond trader as well, Wolfe fails to persuade us of his helplessness in withstanding the accusation that is leveled at him, rather than at Maria, on the theory that he was driving the car at the time of the accident. For the fictional consequence of Wolfe's abiding interest in Manhattan chic is that he has focused his novel not on a young fellow of humble beginnings like Clyde Griffiths, or on a mere saloon manager like Hurstwood in *Sister Carrie*, but on a man whose father is the leonine senior partner, now retired, of one of New York's most prestigious law firms, and who is himself well-educated, supremely self-confident, and rich.

In addition to asking us to accept the idea that such a man would be so stupid as not to call the police, no matter what the cost in marital embarrassment, Wolfe advances an utterly unconvincing explanation of McCoy's amazing decision not to check with his lawyer immediately as to whether lying low and doing nothing is indeed an advisable course. Things get even worse—for the reader who is feeling cheated, that is—when two detectives finally come to McCoy's home to question him. Because the detectives have nothing more to go on than the make of the car involved in the accident and a fragment of its license-plate number, all that McCoy has to do to thwart his questioners is to behave with his usual hauteur. In newspaper interviews Wolfe has been quoted as saying that he personally loves the characters in *The Bonfire*—but he doesn't love McCoy sufficiently to refrain from violating his character in order to ensnare him in the toils of the law. Guilt is veritably emblazoned upon the bond trader's every reply to the officers, so that they come away from his awesome apartment agog at their dumb luck in having discovered the needle in the haystack.

NEAR the conclusion of the book, McCoy estimates that at his second trial (the first having ended in a hung jury) he might be put away for "8⅓ to 25." Acquittal or a sentence of community service has right along, however, been the genuine legal probability, which all the stylistic razzmatazz and socko subplot developments in the author's arsenal of literary distractions do not succeed in concealing. Indeed, so fraught with saving considerations for the defendant is the criminal evidence against McCoy that in addition to making his pessimism seem mysterious, it casts a deep shadow of doubt upon the decision of the Bronx District Attorney, Abe Weiss, to go after McCoy hammer and tongs. Weiss, to be sure, is facing a close race for reelection, and he thinks that a "Great White Defendant" will be a means of placating his black constitutents' alleged outrage about the fact that, of the 40,000 people arrested annually in the Bronx, the overwhelming majority are blacks and Latins. Does the McCoy case, however, like the Griffiths case in *An American Tragedy*, constitute a cause with which a district attorney can really win friends and influence people? *The Bonfire* not only affirms that it does, but further asserts that the black population of the Bronx, and of the other boroughs as well, is on the verge of a massive social uprising.

Reverend Bacon, as we might expect, is fond of advancing this view of the black temper, especially when white liberals show signs of disappointment in him. Thus when Edward Fiske III, community outreach director of the Episcopal diocese of New York, at the ankles of whose intellectual liberalism a thousand little things about blacks are already snapping, discovers to his vast distress that the board of trustees of Bacon's Little Shepherd Day Care Center is composed of four black men with criminal records and three others on parole from prison, he journeys up to Harlem and attempts to retrieve the diocese's donation to the center of $350,000. For his pains, the appalled Episcopalian is treated to a warning of doomsday a-coming. "I'm the conservative, whether you know it or not," Bacon instructs him. "You don't know who's *out there* on those wild and hungry streets. I am your prudent broker on Judgment Day. Harlem, the Bronx, and Brooklyn, they're gonna *blow*, and on that day, how grateful you will be for your prudent broker." Being a satirist, Wolfe of course is inviting us to laugh at Bacon's threatening reply to the feckless Fiske. Yet he also takes—or pretends to take—this kind of talk seriously, as he makes clear in his account of the conspicuous-consumption dinner party staged by a parvenu couple named Bavardage in their Fifth Avenue apartment.

DINNER parties are more easily brought off by hostesses in real life than by novelists in fiction. The handful of successes in American literature, of which the most notable takes place in William Dean Howells's *The Rise of Silas Lapham*, has definitely not been augmented by the evening at the Bavardages'. As usual, Wolfe is a keen-eyed observer of the ladies' dresses, the table decorations, and the food, yet despite their up-to-the-minute accuracy his observations blur together with the Thackerayan names he has bestowed on some of the guests and the bits of pretentious conversation he records into an altogether unremarkable rendering of a vanity fair, while Wolfe's Waugh-like purpose of casting an aura of decadence over the evening is put to rout by his inability to come up with examples of it.

With the defeat of that larger purpose, the vision of the looming demise of New York's privileged classes that the homosexual English poet Aubrey Buffing sets before the Bavardages and their guests seems even more gratuitous than it might otherwise have been. Even though Buffing is rumored to be on the short list for the Nobel Prize, it

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is not from his own work that he fashions his apocalyptic allegory, but from Edgar Allan Poe's. In his last years, the poet reminds his audience, Poe lived just north of here, in a part of New York called the Bronx. He was a drunk, of course, Buffing goes on to say, and perhaps a psychotic, but with the madness of prophetic vision he once wrote a story, "The Masque of the Red Death," that "tells all we need to know about the moment we live in now."

A mysterious plague, called the Red Death, is ravaging the land. Prince Prospero—Prince *Pros*pero, Buffing emphasizes—assembles all the best people in his castle, in which he has stored a two-year supply of food and drink, and then shuts the gates against the outside world—"against the virulence of all lesser souls," as Buffing glosses the story—and commences a masked ball that he intends to keep going in all seven of the castle's salons until the plague has burned itself out beyond the walls. One night, however, a guest appears dressed as death. Prospero is filled with a murderous rage by this unwanted apparition, and pursues him into a room appointed entirely in black. But just as he is about to strike at the guest's ghastly shroud, the Prince falls down dead. For the plague has entered the house of Prospero:

> Now, the exquisite part of the story [says Buffing] is that somehow the guests have known all along what awaits them in this room, and yet they are drawn irresistibly toward it, because the excitement is so intense and the pleasure is so unbridled and the gowns and the food and the drink and the flesh are so sumptuous—and that is all they have. Families, homes, children, the great chain of being, the eternal tide of chromosomes mean nothing to them any longer. They are bound together, and they whirl about one another, endlessly, particles in a doomed atom—and what else could the Red Death be but some sort of final stimulation, the *ne plus ultra*?

The woebegone Sherman McCoy has been among Buffing's auditors, and the personal message of doom he hears in the poet's words is the message that Tom Wolfe, who prefers clarity to subtlety, wants to make sure we catch as well. "That mannered, ghostly English voice had been the voice of an oracle. Aubrey Buffing had been speaking straight to him, as if he were a medium dispatched by God Himself. Edgar Allan Poe!—*Poe*!—the ruin of the dissolute!—in the Bronx—*the Bronx*! The meaningless whirl, the unbridled flesh, the obliteration of home and hearth!—and waiting in the last room, the Red Death." The only exegetical connection that McCoy (speaking here for Wolfe) refrains from spoon-feeding to us is that the skinny black youth whose coma and eventual death derive from a collision with the fishtailing rear end of a Mercedes had grown up in a housing development in the Bronx called the Edgar Allan Poe projects.

In *The Bonfire of the Vanities*, the imminence of a revolutionary situation is allegorically insisted on. The prophecy is neither validated nor vindicated, however, by the story the novel tells. The result is that one comes away from the book feeling that Wolfe's apocalypticism has simply been temporarily assumed, in order to lend portentousness to his tale, and that Wolfe really believes, with the mayor of New York, that this kind of thinking is "completely crazy, . . . absolutely paranoid!"

The Democrats' Dilemma

THE LIFE OF THE PARTY: DEMOCRATIC PROSPECTS IN 1988 AND BEYOND. By ROBERT KUTTNER. *Viking/Elisabeth Sifton Books. 265 pp. $18.95.*

Reviewed by DAVID BROOKS

ROBERT KUTTNER, who is among the more prominent of the Democratic party's younger intel-

DAVID BROOKS, *a new contributor, is the book editor of the* Wall Street Journal.

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lectuals, has the soul of a Tammany ward boss. In fact, as Kuttner himself reveals, one of the inspiring personalities behind his *The Life of the Party: Democratic Prospects in 1988 and Beyond* is George Washington Plunkitt, the Tammany captain who at the turn of the century held forth from the bootblack stand of the New York County Court House on the virtues of honest graft, the value of "studyin' human nature and actin' accordin'," and the uselessness of "chasin' after theories and stayin' up nights readin' books."

The Life of the Party sets out a strategy which Kuttner believes will create a permanent Democratic majority. Recognizing that the party's progressive elites, with their isolationist foreign policy and nihilistic cultural ideas, are a political liability, he argues that the Democrats can nevertheless win votes from the country's socially conservative majority if they run and then deliver on the bread-and-butter issues. He would thus have the Democrats promise and enact such programs as: national health insurance, all-day school grants, free child care, grants for home-buyers, job training, full-employment guarantees, and public-works programs. It would all be centralized in Washington, it would be paid for by the rich (through a transfer tax on stock sales, for example), and it would instill in its beneficiaries an attitude of dependency on big government and, especially, on the Democratic party.

Kuttner, in short, envisages another New Deal realignment, the "strategic use of governance to create political conditions for cohesive egalitarian policies." George Washington Plunkitt expressed the same strategy in pithier language: "We stood as we have always stood, for rewardin' the men that won the victory." And Harry Hopkins, one of Franklin D. Roosevelt's henchmen, had another phrase which captured the New Deal's genius at majority-making: "Tax and tax, spend and spend, elect and elect."

The bulk of Kuttner's book is a critique of the modern-day institutions and tendencies which block a Democratic return to Hopkins's populist formula. Modern Democrats have generally welcomed the increasing emphasis on the media and on money in political life, the growing institutional importance of Gucci-shod powerbrokers and ideological think tanks; they have shared the sunny assumption that dealignment and rampant ticket-splitting are healthy developments; worst of all, they have espoused an endearing faith in the power of new ideas. Kuttner sees all these developments, so characteristic of the new Washington, as fundamentally Republican, and as having produced an atmosphere in which Democrats cannot flourish.

Thus, although he has some nice things to say about the denizens of liberal think tanks, basically Kuttner dismisses them as patrician meddlers, and worse, political naïfs. "To them," he writes, " 'policy' is something splendidly disconnected from politics, or connected only via a high-minded civic exercise." Neoliberals are targets of his ultimate put-down: "Unreliable stewards of the Democratic party," they are "a bit too enchanted with the notion of a general interest transcending the limited interests of various social groups."

Kuttner remains, in general, unimpressed by this notion, preferring instead the rule that what is good for the Democratic party is good for the nation. A neoliberal like James Fallows might come up with an idea that aims to benefit the nation as a whole—say, the capitalization of emerging high-tech industries—but, writes Kuttner, this would have to come at the expense of rust-belt dinosaurs, and "as Plunkitt of Tammany Hall or for that matter Harry Hopkins might have reminded Fallows, these are good Democratic voters you're talking about, son. It's one thing for a new-class intellectual to write such people off; it's quite another to commend this view as a philosophy for the Democratic party."

On analogous grounds Kuttner opposes such policies, endorsed by a number of Democratic economists, as means-testing for welfare, by which programs are directed at those who need them. Kuttner argues that since participation in government programs instills communitarian values, which are the natural bedrock of a Democratic coalition, such programs should therefore expand to touch as many middle-class lives as possible, even if there is no strictly economic reason for doing so. By the same token he opposes voucher programs in education, health care, and legal services, because while they may be more efficient, and more conducive to individual choice, they do not raise consciousness—i.e., reinforce the image of a protective government.

Do Kuttner's ideas have a place in today's Democratic party? It would not seem so. Rather than acknowledging the legitimacy of mainstream America's mistrust of what they stand for, leading Democrats appear to have decided that their problem is one of packaging. Articles in the new Democratic canon bear such titles as "A New Language for the Left," and a typical suggestion is that Democrats should drop the word "liberal" in favor of "progressive" because the latter has fewer negative connotations among white males in the South and West. In short, such Democratic "rethinking" as exists owes more to marketing than to philosophy.

These repackaging efforts have been or promise to be failures. But is Kuttner's the road to success? True, the voters of the South and West, who live in such towns as Tippah, Mississippi, Ringgold, Iowa, and Atoka, Oklahoma, seem unwilling to rejoin the Democratic party unless it can deliver tangible economic goods. Yet the Democrats' dilemma is that they may not be able to recapture the populists in Atoka without disaffecting the progressives in Cambridge, Beverly Hills, Manhattan, and Bethesda.

There are two groups of progressives that any Democratic strategist thinking about Kuttner's answer to his problem has to worry about: the elite who are professionally involved in politics or policy, and the broader numbers of upper-middle-class do-gooders for whom politics is a high-minded hobby.

The first group might well turn out to be not much of a problem at all. Although Kuttner disdains the neoliberals—the Washington in-

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siders who draw their livings from law firms and consultant organizations, and the army of congressional staffers and agency underlings—a Kuttnerian program, even one which repudiates the public interest for the sake of party interest, would have little trouble buying their support.

Take, for example, the issue of protectionism. Economists of all stripes agree that protectionism in any form is harmful to the nation, but powerful interests see that it is nevertheless to their benefit. It takes an opportunistic, desperate, and intellectually dissolute party to hoist the protectionist banner, for such a party has to be able to say to itself, "We know the experts say this is bad for the country, and privately we know they are right, but we need this issue to win votes." Such a party was the Republican party of fifty years ago; it is the Democratic party of today. The Washington *Post* and other liberal organs still argue against protectionism, but not too vehemently; on this issue, and faced with the prospect of another Republican presidency, liberal policy professionals would most likely be willing to tolerate Democratic-party opportunism on a massive scale.

THE do-gooders who dominate the Democratic primaries pose a more serious threat, because while they might naively "believe in" populist economic measures—massive public-employment programs, confiscatory tax policies for the rich, a nationalized health insurance—they would be repelled by the rough-and-tumble politics which has always characterized local populist enterprises. Harry Hopkins, for example, forfeited his chance to succeed Roosevelt in the White House when he turned federal relief dollars over to big-city machines and used WPA workers to aid the primary campaigns of White House loyalists. His defense—"There is nothing wrong with supporting the political group that will give you the most"—enraged progressive sensibilities of the day, which were if anything less delicate than those of today, when high-minded progressives are more high-minded than ever.

Walter Mondale was talking directly to these progressives when he said, "I would rather lose an election about decency than win one about self-interest." Indeed, today's dainty progressives, who demand purity in their candidates, have all but written honest self-interest out of the political debate. The jobs and special-favors programs they do endorse come wrapped as civil-rights crusades or "family policies." These cause-of-the-month-club groupies have enough power in the Democratic primary system to crush any populist candidacy of the Kuttnerian stripe—unless such a candidate can successfully disguise his populism by exuding communitarian gush.

As it happens, this year there is such a candidate: Paul Simon. Just as the Roosevelt personality appealed to both elite progressives (with some misgivings) and aggrieved populists, Paul Simon is well constructed to capture votes from Cambridge to Carson City. The author of twelve books, with a bit of an unpolished, Adlai Stevenson graininess about him, Simon embraces a platform of out-and-out redistributionism: an $11-billion program for full employment, defense cuts, taxes on the rich—all adding up to a balanced budget. Most importantly, Simon believes that this wish list—which anybody from Michael Dukakis rightward would call disastrous for the nation—is actually in the national interest. His positions are opportunistic, but he is sincere about them, and sincerity is to the progressives what preparedness is to the Boy Scouts.

Simon's problem, however, and Kuttner's too, is that his conception of populism is still class-based and therefore obsolete. Real incomes have increased by about 200 percent since the New Deal; today's populists are likely to have college degrees. In fact, the most visible populists in America are business leaders and Republican conservatives like T. Boone Pickens and H. Ross Perot, who have railed against big business and liberal cultural values in equally resonant terms. Even among Democrats, the most truly populist-sounding figure is Lee Iacocca. Class antagonism, once the base of populist discontent, has largely disappeared from American life, as is demonstrated in numerous polls by Roper and the National Opinion Research Center.

Nor is redistribution any longer the heart of a populist economic policy, although Kuttner and Simon still cling to the notion. The populism of the 1980's, which cuts across economic lines, is fueled mostly by grievances about the internationalization of the U.S. economy. When a *Wall Street Journal* reporter asked Jesse Jackson what was his worst mistake in politics, the answer was: "Failure to study the internationalization of the economy and its damaging effects on all sectors of society, not only blacks." If you ask many a Democratic politician what he is going to do to help the nation adapt to the internationalized economy, his response will be, "I'm against it."

Thus we are back to protectionism. The trade measures now being proposed by Democrats would be a first step toward building a Great Wall around the American economy; restrictions on the flow of capital would be another. An electoral campaign informed by this new economic isolationism, and drawing on reserves of nativism, xenophobia, and anti-Asian racism, might indeed appeal to populist constituencies across the nation, and it might indeed be good for the prospects of the Democratic party. It would also be ugly in the extreme, the sort of spectacle only a George Washington Plunkitt would enjoy.

Fragments of Fragments

ANSWERED PRAYERS. By TRUMAN CAPOTE. *Random House. 180 pp. $16.95.*

Reviewed by GEORGE SIM JOHNSTON

ALMOST thirty years ago, Norman Mailer wrote of Truman Capote:

> . . . he is the most perfect writer of my generation, he writes the

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best sentences word for word, rhythm upon rhythm. . . . Capote has still given no evidence that he is serious about the deep resources of the novel, and his short stories are too often saccharine. At his worst he has less to say than any good writer I know. I would suspect he hesitates between the attractions of Society which enjoys and so repays him for his unique gifts, and the novel he could write of the gossip column's real life, a major work, but it would banish him forever from his favorite world. Since I have nothing to lose, I hope Truman fries a few of the fancier fish.

I offer Mailer's observations not only because his snap literary judgments are seldom wrong, but because Mailer's career offers a curious parallel to that of Capote. Both were floundering novelists who achieved second lives as journalists, earning far more esteem (and money) from factual reportage than they had from their not quite rereadable novels. But neither was able to shake off the notion that he had a great novel in him, one that would finally get down on paper the sprawling social realities of America in a way that no contemporary novelist had done. Both published a few silly fragments of the supposed work in progress and then—nothing. They seemed, in fact—rather like Bo Belinski holding poolside press conferences at the Los Angeles Angels spring-training camp when he was a non-roster rookie pitcher—to spend more time talking about these books than writing them.

Some of the remarks that Capote made to interviewers, however, did seem to promise the sort of inside reportage about the American upper classes that we have not had since Edith Wharton and F. Scott Fitzgerald. Certainly no novelist who has set up shop as a social chronicler in the past fifty years—John P. Marquand and Louis Auchincloss, for example—could have come up with the following observation, which is to be found in Lawrence Grobel's *Conversations with Capote*: "No, no. The real difference between rich people and regular people is that the rich people serve such marvelous vegetables. Delicious little tiny vegetables. Little fresh-born things, scarcely out of the earth . . . little lambs that have been *ripped* out of their mother's wombs. That's the real difference. All of their vegetables and their meats are so incredibly fresh and unborn." A minor and slightly nauseating item, perhaps; but we read novels precisely to get this sort of information.

THE notion that Capote could write a "big" novel would be absurd if he had not written *In Cold Blood*. His two early attempts in the form, *Other Voices, Other Rooms* and *The Grass Harp*, are little more than gothic curio cabinets. In these two brief books, as well as in his early short stories, Capote creates a hermetic world of misfits and dreamers which is not penetrated by a single mature thought or emotion. He is most comfortable writing about children, but the children in his fiction are disturbingly precocious; they have access to the wrong adult emotions and make us uneasy in the way of 19th-century photographs of children with worn adult faces. Their seniors meanwhile pass their lives in a state of dreamy regression; the adults in the 1949 collection of stories, *A Tree of Night*, for example, always seem to end curled up like fetuses on their beds in the middle of the afternoon.

If Capote's early fiction is finally too precious, the stories and occasional pieces he published in the middle 50's are charming and evocative. "A Christmas Memory" and "Breakfast at Tiffany's" are flawless in their limited way and hold up after many rereadings. Capote's writing improved to a remarkable degree in those years. He purged the cloying adjectives and awkward constructions and fashioned a style that is chaste and subtle—delicately "classical" in a way that makes one think of certain French writers. If Capote had stuck to such pieces he might have acquitted himself as the sort of minor writer who is in short supply on this side of the Atlantic, one who knows his limitations and achieves a kind of perfection within them. But, in the American manner, Capote felt obliged to swing for the fences and come up with the big one. And, unlike most of his contemporaries, he succeeded.

It is pointless to argue whether *In Cold Blood* (1966), about the real-life murder of a family of Kansas farmers by two criminal drifters, is a novel or a work of journalism. It *reads* like a novel and is generous with the pleasures that are deliberately held back by many "serious" contemporary novelists: compelling narrative, vivid characterization, and the sense of a created "world" which lingers long after one has put down the book. In a remarkable technical feat, Capote manages to keep himself invisible throughout the narrative, and he draws no "moral" for the reader about the senseless crime. After the execution of the murderers and a brief epilogue in a Kansas graveyard, we are left simply to wonder at the mysterious disposition of human affairs; the narrative has fulfilled the Jamesian formula, a deep and comprehensive impression of life has been intensely rendered, and that is enough. The transcendent effort of a minor writer, *In Cold Blood* remains one of the best documentary books written by an American.

The amazing critical and commercial success of the book turned Capote, who had already shown considerable gifts for self-publicity, into a media doll. When he gave his masked ball at the Plaza in 1966, bringing off, in Tom Wolfe's words, "the greatest single one-shot social climb" in the history of New York, he spilled into the consciousness of the general public in a way that few American writers have matched. It was about this time that he began to tell interviewers he was embarked on a great Proustian novel about the American upper classes. The first (and only) fragments of this novel did not appear for almost a decade. In the meantime, Capote kept turning out the occasional magazine piece; but his personality as a writer underwent an unfortunate sea-change during these years.

Capote had never made much of a secret of his homosexuality, but until the late 60's he had kept his sexual preoccupations at bay in his writing, much as E.M. Forster did,

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sometimes following what one critic has called the "Albertine strategy" of gender transposition. Forster, of course, wrote at a time when an author had to be circumspect in such matters if he wanted to publish; after *A Passage to India*, he decided that he could no longer abide writing novels in which men could go to bed only with women and lapsed into his famous "silence," during which he wrote tales of homosexual longing that he showed to friends and that were published after his death. By the late 60's in America, there was no need for any such discretion.

It has been said that there are writers who happen to be homosexual, and homosexuals who happen to be writers. In the course of his career, Capote took a long dive from the former to the latter. Both in his prolific interviews and in his increasingly less prolific writing, there surfaced a leering obsession with sex and the bodily functions along with a total disengagement from the usual preoccupations of the mature adult male. George Orwell wrote of Salvador Dali, another artist whose creative life was smothered by sexual preoccupations: ". . . in his outlook, his character, the bedrock decency of a human being does not exist. He is as antisocial as a flea." The world as an ongoing enterprise is of no account to such a person, so why not smirk and make dirty jokes?

IN THE opening pages of *Answered Prayers*, the posthumous collection of what fragments we have of Capote's Proustian epic, the narrator/hero P.B. Jones plunges the reader right away into the literary equivalent of bathroom graffiti. Every page that follows is a mixture of sexual tittering and nasty gossip, the latter mostly about dead or sequestered celebrity—Montgomery Clift, Dorothy Parker, J.D. Salinger, Garbo. We all know people who say they have accumulated so much good gossip they are going to sit down and write a novel some day. But literature is not anecdotes. There is not a hint of creative inspiration in *Answered Prayers*; it seems that Capote simply pasted together some of the less pleasant jottings in his diaries while helping himself to material from his previous journalism, such as his report of a visit to the French writer Colette.

If Capote had been able to marshal the sort of literary discipline that saw him through *In Cold Blood*, a reader would be able to countenance much nonsense from him. But these few "chapters," which were published in *Esquire* in the mid-70's and caused a commotion among people who feel obliged to emote on such occasions, are a mess; they are no more than fragments composed of fragments, a series of sterile, disjointed, mostly smutty incidents. In trying to write an American *A la recherche du temps perdu*, Capote was producing instead a *Jean Santeuil*, Proust's apprentice novel whose description by his biographer George Painter exactly fits *Answered Prayers*: "It is a novel of revenges, of resentments felt and gratified, of self-adoration and self-pity. The hero is an ill-used young man . . . insulted by wicked hostesses . . . and pseudo-artists; a benevolent Providence ensures that he invariably scores off them all. . . ." If you add that the hero is willing to perform any sexual service for modest recompense, you have Capote's alter ego, P.B. Jones. Proust as an artist managed to grow out of all this, while Capote, reacting to very different pressures at a different time, only got worse.

Capote never entirely lost his powers of observation and delicate phrasing, however, and the book has its passing felicities. Jean Cocteau, for example, is described as "a walking laser light with a sprig of *muguet* in his buttonhole." That is as good as a Beerbohm caricature. And the writing as a whole has a kind of raunchy vitality, rather like Henry Miller at his best, which keeps the reader going from page to page. But finally we must judge Capote unable to imagine adult characters for the purposes of fiction. We are left, then, with a minor writer who produced some charming magazine pieces and one book which is a permanent classic.

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Beyond Socialist Realism

THE VELVET PRISON: ARTISTS UNDER STATE SOCIALISM. *By* MIKLÓS HARASZTI. Translated by KATALIN AND STEPHEN LANDESMANN with the help of STEVE WASSERMAN. *Basic Books/New Republic Books. 163 pp. $14.95.*

Reviewed by ARCH PUDDINGTON

The Velvet Prison appears at a particularly opportune moment. The author, a prominent Hungarian opposition intellectual, argues that in Communist countries the relaxation of state control over cultural affairs has not—indeed, cannot—enhance the freedom of the artist. Paradoxically, he contends, the "soft" censorship favored by the authorities in Hungary and other "liberal" Communist nations has been much more effective than the Stalinist tactics of bygone years in ensuring the obedience of the intellectual class. The modern totalitarian system, he says, has proved flexible enough to accommodate change and at the same time sufficiently strong to make certain that the pace and direction of change fulfill the needs of the party-state.

This is an important message in the age of *glasnost*. Of all his policy innovations, it is the easing of the rigid press and artistic regimentation of the Brezhnev period which has earned Mikhail Gorbachev his warmest applause in the democratic world. Some, in fact, predict that under Gorbachev's stewardship Soviet cultural policy may come to resemble that of Hungary, considered the most easygoing in the Soviet bloc.

But if Miklós Haraszti's analysis is correct, Soviet artists can look forward not to creative liberty, but rather to a situation in which "censors and artists alike are entangled in a mutual embrace."

Haraszti believes that through the shrewd application of rewards and punishments (but mainly rewards), post-Stalinist authorities have created conditions under which artists, instead of detesting a system which limits their autonomy, support the system's preservation out of self-interest.

Two techniques have been employed toward this end. First, there is economic inducement. At the most basic level, the state ensures that the artist is reasonably well-paid and that his works are published, performed, or exhibited. The state provides retreats for approved artists at luxurious villas expropriated from the wealthy after World War II. Perhaps more important, by limiting the supply of art, the state has guaranteed that artists will never again endure the indignities of the marketplace. Haraszti places special stress on this point, for he believes that, at heart, artists despise and fear the market as the breeding ground of popular culture and economic uncertainty. Culture is therefore regulated like a closed shop in which only the select few who have earned credentials at state institutions are permitted membership. This ensures both that the supply of artistic workers never exceeds the audience and that there are no unemployed, and potentially dissatisfied, artists. So strong is the attachment of Hungarian artists to this system of economic guarantees that the practitioners of culture have actually enlisted in the anti-reform camp when proposed economic changes threaten to inject a dose of market discipline into cultural life.

The second device designed to win the loyalty of artists is the relaxation of cultural controls. Where formerly artists—all artists—were expected to adhere to a specific style, socialist realism, now they are free to practice a variety of forms and techniques. Although a relatively few subjects and styles remain taboo, official tolerance has advanced to the point where art need not have an overtly political character. As Haraszti observes: "The enlightened socialist state understands that politically neutral art is no threat." The state even takes modest pride in permitting some approved artists to express veiled criticism of the one-party system. So long as it is voiced in the context of support for state socialism, mild, carefully-coded opposition is looked on as evidence of the regime's liberality. The authorities recognize that monolithic art will inevitably fail, whereas art which presents differing interpretations to the outside world will strengthen the regime's credibility, both at home and abroad.

THE parallel between the Hungarian experience about which Haraszti writes and Gorbachev's scheme for change in the Soviet Union is striking. A *samizdat* account of a speech to a group of intellectuals reports that Gorbachev urged journalists and artists to become champions of change. According to the Soviet leader, given the absence of competing political parties, intellectuals should function as a political opposition. But as in Hungary, the kind of opposition force envisioned by Gorbachev is a loyal opposition whose criticisms will not stray beyond the boundaries of "the revolution." His conception is thus of a rationed opposition, an opposition which would solidify what Victor Serge called the "regime of Directed Thought." In this context, the term opposition is a misnomer, since Gorbachev's objective is art which serves the interests of the current political leadership at the expense of other factions within the party or bureaucracy.

Haraszti sees this evolving system as "less visible, and more dangerous" than the hard censorship of the Stalin period. More dangerous because of the stress placed on self-censorship, and because artists, rather than seeing the one-party state as the enemy, actively strive to serve the state's goals.

Haraszti cautions against a definition of censorship which focuses solely on the elimination or transformation of words or images. Modern censorship involves rather "the whole context of culture, not just state intervention but all the circumstances that conspire to destroy the basis of autonomous or authentic artistic activity." In addition to the financial rewards doled out to artists willing to function within the revised guidelines, the state offers a hitherto unknown social importance to "those people of quality hungry for power." Where formerly the idea of the artist bearing responsibility for the future of society was considered strange, to-

ARCH PUDDINGTON *works for Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty in New York.*

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day it is normal, so that now "every artist is a minor politician of culture." In the Soviet Union, Gorbachev is attempting to turn the intellectuals into ambassadors of *perestroika*.

Haraszti is contemptuous of the oft-repeated contention that a decrease in repression leads to a "braver culture," an idea he dismisses as the "optimism of the tourist." Although the methods of control have been altered, the end result differs not at all from the function of art under Stalin. Moreover, under Communism the status of art has been returned to the role it occupied during feudalism. Art is once again inextricably linked to the Establishment while artists have again become "nothing more than ornamentalists of an unchanging world order from their earliest youth to their old age."

And what of dissident writers, those who refuse to accept their appointed function even under the newly relaxed system? Haraszti contends that dissidents face a more daunting challenge than when a prison sentence or even the firing squad was meted out to nonconformists. The state, of course, retains a vast array of bureaucratic techniques to prevent the rebellious artist from practicing his craft. In addition, dissidents are treated as outcasts by the fraternity of approved artists, which views them as immature and a threat to the status quo. The dissident exists in a ghettoized condition, his audience restricted to other dissidents. He is thus "doomed to irrelevance."

WHILE Haraszti's analysis is a needed antidote to those Westerners ever eager to interpret the slightest evidence of official tolerance as proof that artistic freedom flourishes in this or that Communist country, his pessimistic conclusion about the status of the intellectual opposition seems overdrawn. Haraszti claims that his assessment applies uniformly throughout the Communist world, but his opinions mainly derive from contemporary Hungarian reality, where the Kádár regime has in fact largely succeeded in coopting the intellectual class. But whereas in Hungary intellectual dissidents have been unable to forge alliances with other potential forces of political opposition, a significantly different situation prevails in Poland. There, a vast alternative culture has taken root since the time of Solidarity's active existence. If the regime does not heed the advice of the opposition, it is certainly aware of the opposition's ideas and programs, as are the masses of Poles who have regular access to the hundreds of unofficial publications printed each month.

Part of the problem stems from Haraszti's fascination with perfect, self-contained systems. He himself comes from a family with deep roots in the Hungarian Communist movement, and in his youth he was drawn to ultra-leftist ideologies, especially Maoism. Although a confirmed democrat, Haraszti continues to apply a Marxist style of analysis and vocabulary when interpreting political problems. This combination of democratic conviction and Marxist method lends an unusual clarity and power to his writing; at the same time, it occasionally leads to unjustifiably extreme conclusions.

Nonetheless, Haraszti's lapses into unwarranted pessimism should not obscure the importance of his message. He has pointedly reminded us that, despite the beguiling words of modern, pragmatic, and "Western-oriented" Communist leaders, Communism as a system remains incompatible with real freedom.

Musician and Composer

DUKE ELLINGTON. By JAMES LINCOLN COLLIER. *Oxford University Press. 340 pp. $19.95.*

Reviewed by
WILLIAM H. YOUNGREN

IN RECENT years James Lincoln Collier, formerly known as the author of several highly praised children's books, has emerged as one of our most prominent writers on jazz. *The Making of Jazz* (1978) is a compendious, useful, not especially original history of the music; *Louis Armstrong: An American Genius* (1983) is an informative but dubiously psychologized account of the great trumpet player's life and times; the entry under "Jazz" in *The New Grove Dictionary of American Music* (1986) is excellent, considering the space limitations imposed. Now Collier has given us a book on Duke Ellington that, like its predecessors, has much to be said in its favor.

Collier, as always, has done his homework, and his account of Ellington's background and growing-up years, his lucky entry into the music business at just the time when "the entertainment industry became the cutting edge of the integration movement," and his fruitful alliance with his manager Irving Mills is lucid and insightful. Collier also traces in detail the changes in personnel through which the Ellington band gradually evolved from the "rough, Dixieland band" that got its start in 1923 at Times Square's Hollywood Inn (later the Kentucky Club), to the larger and more accomplished unit that moved in 1927 to Harlem's Cotton Club, to the great ensemble of the 1930's and the early 1940's. And many of his detailed analyses of particular records are both perceptive and inviting. Ellington's later years are, quite understandably, covered less fully.

But if *Duke Ellington* is a more original book than *The Making of Jazz*, and is mostly free of the ponderous psychological speculation of *Louis Armstrong*, it is nonetheless seriously flawed by Collier's curiously skewed treatment of Ellington the musician.

Collier begins by citing two brief characterizations of Ellington by two of his best-known sidemen. First, clarinetist Barney Bigard: "Everyone in that band knew they were working with a genius." Then, trumpet player Cootie Williams: "Duke was the greatest guy I ever met in my life. Musician and man." Much of the 300 pages that follow is devoted to an attempt to undo, or muddle, or at least severely qualify the plain sense of these remarks.

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Neither Bigard nor Williams was a great jazzman—though Williams had moments when he came close—but both were excellent, thoroughly accomplished players of wide professional experience, and both worked for Ellington long enough to know his ins and outs as a musician, Bigard for fourteen years (1928-42) and Williams for twenty-two (1929-40 and 1962-73). High praise for the boss does not usually come easy, and their testimony as to Ellington's musical endowments ought to be taken seriously. But Collier's immediate comment is only that Ellington "was charismatic almost from childhood."

In the paragraphs that follow, Collier argues that while "most artistic achievement of a high order depends . . . on the possession of a gift, a given, of a skill of some kind greater than that granted to most people," Ellington "had no such gift." He did not have "the melodic inventiveness of a Bix Beiderbecke, a Johnny Hodges"; "his sense of larger form, of musical architecture, was notoriously weak"; and though he was "an excellent band pianist," he was without "the exquisite rhythmic sense of a Louis Armstrong, a Benny Goodman, a Lester Young." Moreover, Ellington was not precocious and "did not begin to make a name for himself until he was almost thirty." How then, Collier asks rhetorically, "can a man with no easily discernible gift produce a body of work so important?" For Collier "the answer lies in his character"; "with Duke Ellington the character and the talent were one."

I had better confess at once that I do not understand what this means. The sketch that Collier gives of Ellington's character pretty much agrees with what we already know from other sources—indeed, one of the faults of the book is that Collier seems to have relied so heavily on these sources and to have conducted few interviews himself. Born in Washington, D.C., in 1899 into a relatively respectable and genteel family, Ellington had a "childhood [that] was uneventful and happier than most." Because he "grew up secure in the unending love of his mother," he early developed a "sense that he was special" that would stay with him all his life. "Mother dear," he proclaimed while still a boy, "your son is going to be the greatest, the grandest, the glorious Duke"—hence the famous nickname. Though he was somewhat lazy, lacked discipline, and was averse to formal study of any sort, he was indeed charismatic—Williams was just one of many band members who would leave the fold only to return in later years. Ellington's treatment of the many women in his life and of his son Mercer was often haphazard, sometimes cruel. But he was intensely loyal to his parents and his sister, and also to his sidemen—except when his womanizing led him into direct rivalry with one of them. His loyalty to his men was, however, combined with a need to manipulate and dominate people and situations. The finely crafted façade of elegant, extroverted worldliness that he presented to the public in later years—"I love you madly!"—concealed a very private man who revealed himself only to a few intimates.

So far, so good. Collier is surely right in saying that Ellington was not a great performing musician and that it was only in the early 1930's that the Ellington band really defined its style and came into its own. But from then through the great records of 1940-42, it was, as Collier acknowledges, Ellington's "artistic vision that shaped the final product" and that created "unified pieces in which the personalities of the soloists are subordinated to" his own "artistic purposes." Yet immediately after these words, which come at the very end of his book, Collier feels impelled to reiterate: "If, then, it was Ellington who created these pieces, we must find their source in his character."

To me this makes no sense. Granted that it was Ellington's character that drew people to him, and that helped him to retain their loyalty and affection, it was nothing less than what Bigard rightly calls his genius, his prodigious (though late-blooming) musical gift, that enabled him to forge the disparate talents of his players into an unmatched orchestral entity and to create the hundreds of pieces that displayed them to unique advantage. Why should Collier want to deny, or at least fudge, this simple truth by arbitrarily relabeling as "character" everything that in another man we should call "talent"?

The answer lies in Collier's preoccupation, even obsession, with proving that Ellington was not really a composer. Again and again Collier produces this or that musician's testimony that he or someone else either wrote a piece credited to Ellington or, more often, came up with the key phrase on which a piece was based. Some of these claims are familar and of undoubted merit. It has long been recognized that "Creole Love Call" was taken from King Oliver's "Camp Meeting Blues," and "Mood Indigo" was often partially credited to Bigard even before he sued Ellington and got his name put on the sheet music. But Collier seems far too ready to accept without question many other claims that are not only more dubious but are also insubstantial.

Perhaps it is true, as trombonist Lawrence Brown claimed, that "I Let a Song Go Out of My Heart" was based on an idea that alto saxophonist Johnny Hodges played on a tune the band didn't happen to record. Or that the six-note descending figure on which "Never No Lament" (later known as "Don't Get Around Much Anymore") was based "was something, apparently, that Hodges used to warm up on." But what of it? Who was it that thought up the nonchalant, loose-jointed little piano introduction to "I Let a Song Go Out of My Heart," laid out the elegant duet between Hodges and baritone saxophonist Harry Carney that follows it, and had the witty inspiration of allowing trombonist Tricky Sam Nanton to interject just four bars of rough growling into these plush, sophisticated surroundings? And who was it that planned the subtle, constantly varying orchestral responses to the six-note descending phrase on "Never No Lament"? To use the sort of inconsequential evidence that Col-

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lier brings forward in order to detract from Ellington's role in the creation of these and other pieces is a little like saying that the *Diabelli Variations* is not really an original work since it was, after all, Diabelli who wrote the little waltz that Beethoven took as his point of departure.

Some of the time, at least, Collier seems aware of this. Of "Never No Lament" he concludes (on the basis of no discernible evidence whatever): "Undoubtedly, Ellington brought almost nothing to the recording session but Hodges's little melody." But then he feels impelled to add: "The whole thing was constructed on the spot, and so sure, on this day, was Ellington's sense of form that he turned a fragment of melody—hardly more than a piece of a scale—into a jazz classic. It is a stunning example of Ellington's musical intelligence and once again shows us that he was at his best with the simplest materials." But isn't "musical intelligence" of this sort, involving a "sure . . . sense of form," a "gift"? Why equate it with or subsume it under "character"?

COLLIER loves Ellington's music too much, and is too honest a man and writer, to be taken in by his own thesis when he is actually describing a particular piece. But whenever he begins to discuss composition in the abstract, he reveals a woefully naive and limited conception of how that mysterious process must necessarily take place—a conception that is indeed linked, in his mind, to a certain sort of character quite different from Ellington's.

The certified, genuine composer, Collier apparently believes, is necessarily an earnest, studious soul who has mastered a body of rules and a set of textbook models of acceptable forms. He then sits down to his piano—perhaps with the works of Fux and Rameau (or Piston and Forsyth) close at hand, to ward off errors—and proceeds to compose.

Poor, undisciplined Ellington, on the other hand, disdained "elaborate plans and preparations," had "contempt for the rules," and "never really studied the schemes the 19th-century composers used to make a long piece hang together." Thus he "lacked the training to sit down at a piano and write a piece cold." "Form, architecture, did not particularly interest him." Therefore he "was driven" (once again by "temperament" and "character") to break rules rather than follow them, to employ "forms other than the eight- and sixteen-bar forms to which virtually all popular tunes were cut." He was also much intrigued by the move from the tonic to the flat sixth—the move, for example, in C major from a C chord or episode to an A-flat one. Since flat sixths, Collier confidently tells us, "are considered, in music theory, to be 'distant' keys or chords," Ellington must simply have "stumbled upon the tonic-flat sixth relationship." And since the tritone, or diminished fifth, was once "referred to as 'the devil's interval,' " Collier concludes that Ellington's fondness for it must likewise have been dictated by his "temperament," by his sense that "using the tritone was venturing into dangerous territory." It was this rebellious streak that also led to Ellington's "habit of putting sevenths at the bottom" of seventh chords.

Well, that is an unorthodox way to voice seventh chords, but to do so need not indicate a contempt for rules or a lack of discipline. In 1899 Schoenberg, at bar 42 of the first movement of *Verklärte Nacht*, went a step further and voiced a ninth chord with the ninth on the bottom. Yet twelve years later he produced one of the great conservative harmony texts. As for the tritone, it was indeed condemned in medieval treatises as "*diabolus in musica*," and was largely avoided for centuries. But melodic tritones are everywhere in Wagner, and they became almost a cliché of post-Wagnerian music. Similarly, the move to the flat sixth is one of the trademarks of Romantic music —you can find it on almost any page of Schubert. And as for phrases of irregular length, one need only look at Haydn. Yet all these composers were trained masters of their craft. Whether Ellington knew their works directly or not is beside the point. The devices that Collier singles out as so defiantly outrageous were, long be-

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fore the 1930's, when Ellington began seriously to compose for his band, part of the common coin of Western music. Anyone with ears as sharp as his would surely have become aware of them and of the fact that their expressive qualities perfectly suited the rich, even lush, effects he increasingly was striving for.

More important, most composers do not "sit down at a piano and write a piece cold." Or at least that is not a valid test of competence. Some, like Mozart, compose mainly in their heads; others, like Beethoven and Wagner, work very gradually, through long series of sketches, to the finished piece. Collier also seems to count it against Ellington's claims to being a real composer that he did not think of his pieces "as compositions separate from his orchestra." But this was certainly true of many Baroque composers, and even of Haydn, working off in the country at Eszterháza. The few documented evidences of Ellington's attempts at study with trained musicians are cast by Collier in a faintly disreputable light. He speaks of some work that Ellington did in the late 1920's with the composer Will Marion Cook and with Will Vodery, Ziegfeld's music director, as "mining these two men for information." And of the later relation with Billy Strayhorn, Collier remarks: "Duke Ellington was a man who would slyly squeeze advice out of people."

If composers are any good, the relation of the rules they have learned to the music they produce is of course never a simple one of cause and effect, input and output. Bruckner, who was immensely learned in traditional harmony and counterpoint, was fond of telling his students at the Vienna Conservatory: "But of course that's not the way *I* do it." As evidence for his contention that "it was the essence of [Ellington's] character to break rules," Collier cites Mercer Ellington's perceptive remark, in his 1978 memoir *Duke Ellington in Person*: "To discard a rule was a source of inspiration to him because he immediately saw the way to make it work in reverse." That is originality, not simple rebellion—yet Collier doesn't seem to see it.

At least during his great years, roughly 1932-42, Duke Ellington was indeed a composer, and a very fine and original one—even though most of his pieces were quite short and all of them were conceived with a particular ensemble in mind. Yet Collier cites, with apparent agreement, Lawrence Brown's angry remark to Ellington's face: "I don't consider you a composer. You are a compiler." And he stubbornly insists that "through all of his work, Ellington was developing a method of—we cannot say composing, but creating compositions." But this is, as philosophers say, a distinction without a difference. To compose is precisely to create compositions.

Why should Collier go to so much trouble to prove something so contrary to common sense, ordinary language, and musical experience? Mainly, I think, because he wants to maintain that the turn Ellington took in his later years, beginning perhaps with the 1943 *Black, Brown, and Beige*, to writing extended concert works was "one of the great artistic errors in jazz history." And surely he is right in saying that these works are pretentious and mostly far too long, and that it is mainly in their jazz sections that one gets a taste of the great, earlier Ellington.

It was, as Collier points out, the band's 1933 trip to England that first encouraged the streak of intellectual pretentiousness in Ellington that led him eventually to attempt these later works. He learned, to his surprise and delight, that Constant Lambert and other English critics were comparing him to Debussy and Delius, and upon his return he remarked, rather touchingly, "maybe our music does mean something." But as Collier also points out, this same trip also helped give Ellington the self-confidence to begin experimenting in the mid-1930's and finally to produce the masterpieces of 1940-42: "Ko-Ko," "Concerto for Cootie," "Cotton Tail," "Main Stem," and the rest of that glorious company.

Whether Ellington could have gone on producing works of this quality within the short forms dictated by the confines of the 10-inch 78-rpm record and the conditions of dance-band work, we shall never know. Collier's word "error" therefore seems a bit too simple. But that the thirty-odd concert suites and the three "Sacred Concerts" of Ellington's later years are vastly inferior to his greatest work hardly needed arguing in the first place. It is Collier's error to have allowed his overriding eagerness to prove what needs no proof so largely to determine the terms and the shape of his argument.

And this error is, as I have suggested, based on a larger one. For it is simply not true, as Collier says it is, that "architecture is not an important concern of most jazz musicians" or that "jazz is more emotion than design." A good jazz musician learns by experience what will work for him in which circumstances, and he proceeds accordingly. As the comparison of alternate masters of the same recording often demonstrates, much of what we think of as improvisation is really the performance of something previously composed. Conversely, anyone who has worked through the sketches of Beethoven or Wagner has observed at first hand a process of continuously developing improvisation. To be sure, this process is carried out by such composers on a far larger scale than that of most jazz performances. But it is fundamentally the same process.

Jazz musicians are not free and spontaneous, while composers are limited and constrained by rules and formal schemes. Both are relatively free within the confines of their chosen media. For it is only through form, or architecture if you like, that emotion is effectively and satisfyingly conveyed in music. And this is true not only of larger forms like a movement of a Beethoven symphony or an act of a Wagner opera, but also of ones as small as a three-minute record by Ellington or Armstrong, a Chopin waltz or a Schubert song. Emotion and form are not opposed but are complementary aspects of every successful musical work. Composition is, most of the time at any rate, improvisation gradually perfected,

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while great jazz improvisation has the demonstrable cohesiveness of premeditated composition. If we can understand this, we can better understand the true place of jazz within the tradition of Western music. The example of a great jazz composer like Duke Ellington can be of immense help in reaching that understanding.

After Balanchine

SIGHT LINES. By ARLENE CROCE. *Knopf. 364 pp. $19.95.*

Reviewed by JACQUELINE COLEMAN

ARLENE CROCE is generally thought to be our most eminent dance critic, but on the evidence of this book, mostly drawn from her reviews over the last five years in the *New Yorker*, she is no longer responding critically to the current American dance scene. The sad truth is that in these years American dance has declined from the position of dynamic world leader to that of faded past master. Miss Croce's apparent reluctance to face up to this fact results in an overly rosy and distorted picture of American dance.

The realities are these: after several decades in which American choreographers explored the beauties and profundities of pure dance, the emphasis in the early 80's shifted to works centered on drama, narrative, or extra-dance themes, for which few turned out to have any aptitude. The pioneering postmodernists, such as Trisha Brown, turned their backs on the spare, nonacademic style they had used in the 70's and buried their work under hugely distracting sets and decor created by high-fashion visual artists. Other postmodernists, like Lucinda Childs and Laura Dean, as well as some mainstream modern dancers like Merce Cunningham, added balletic elements to their works or even choreographed directly for ballet companies. But for the most part their efforts only succeeded in blurring the distinction between ballet and modern dance, and in emasculating them both.

Also during this time, many American regional companies (like the Atlanta Ballet) either turned themselves into watered-down clones of George Balanchine's New York City Ballet (NYCB) or lost their way altogether amid hyper-eclectic programming designed to build a mass audience. The American Ballet Theatre (ABT), under the artistic direction of Mikhail Baryshnikov, lost several of its superstars and set itself on a more contemporary course which it had neither the taste nor the technique to negotiate.

A good number of the country's great dancers, such as Natalia Makarova of ABT and Peter Martins of the NYCB, retired, or, worse, like NYCB's Suzanne Farrell or ABT's Baryshnikov, continued to dance despite painfully reduced capabilities that mocked their erstwhile accomplishments. The vacuum at the top of the ranks then exposed the vacuum at the bottom: there were few real replacements for the stars, because young American dancers, who had been trained to bend themselves into pretzels, had not been taught to act or even to make artful use of their admittedly impressive technique.

Almost no important new American choreographers came to the fore during these years, although Miss Croce tried to find one—prematurely—in the well-composed but cloddy, simplistic works of Mark Morris. And even great established choreographers seemed to lose their touch: Balanchine's Stravinsky Centennial Celebration was uncharacteristically kitschy, Twyla Tharp made several incoherent "message" and narrative works, and Jerome Robbins of NYCB seemed to forget what to do with ballet dancers altogether.

Finally and perhaps most importantly, Balanchine, the great genius and guiding light of American dance, suffered a long illness and died in 1983. This proved to be the end of the New York City Ballet as America's only revolutionary ballet company. Peter Martins, the new Ballet Master in Chief, seemed to ignore the crucially important task of maintaining company style—the sharp edges, haughty posture, swift attack, filigreed hands, and quicksilver footwork for which NYCB was justly famed—and devoted his energies instead to churning out his own choreography: superficial, static Balanchine imitations that shamefully diluted a repertoire of masterpieces.

EVENTUALLY Miss Croce arrives in the course of these reviews at a number of similar conclusions about the major dance trends of the 80's. Mostly, however, she skirts the issue, preferring instead to dwell in loving, overblown reveries on the minutiae of specific performances by her favorite companies and artists, figures whom she seemingly cannot bear to hold to the highest standards.

The encomia fly thick and fast. Thus, Twyla Tharp's "The Catherine Wheel" is here described as "an uncluttered, intensively lyrical experience" (it is an out-of-control, flatfootedly symbolic stew). Mark Morris's "mastery of mimetic implication in the logic of forms" is hailed as "a mark of wisdom as rare in choreography as musical mastery." On Baryshnikov: "No dancer is more eloquent. No actor, either." On Suzanne Farrell: "By never trying to outpoint her former self . . . she has found the secret of perpetual youth." On the NYCB under Peter Martins: "How strange that Balanchine's dancers are more conscious of his principles and more willing to put them into practice now that he is gone."

By the time Miss Croce finally acknowledges, in the book's last review, that "there is a void in American dance," it is hard to know precisely what she is referring to. And even then she does not really explore this "void" at any length, beyond vaguely attributing it, paradoxically and unfairly, to Balanchine himself:

> Might it not be time for another essay, called "The Curse of Balanchine," in which it would be shown how the great choreographer created 20th-century ballet and put it off-limits at the same time? He incorporated into

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the mainstream everything there was to incorporate—jazz, Bauhaus, twelve-tone music, American pop; yes, even the modern dance—and left the academy at a peak of virtuosity, with nothing further to express. Balanchine's progeny rework his accomplishments; they can honor his precedents, but they can add nothing to what he has said. . . . His usages have become standard. . . . He even thought up his own heresies, so in order to rebel against him a choreographer has to risk being completely incoherent. . . .

How could any one individual be responsible for all the malaise in the dance world? Does it have *nothing* to do with the nation's dance schools and companies, or with the unprecedented numbers of young people now involved as dancers or choreographers? Balanchine may be a hard act to follow, but his talent alone cannot explain the confusion or poverty of much of today's dance.

Perhaps the whole messy subject of what happened to American dance in the 1980's is just too depressing for Arlene Croce to probe effectively. But whatever the reason, *Sight Lines* shows us a once brilliant dance critic who has lost her nerve—and a fair measure of her pertinence.

Preserving the Union

FREEDOM. By WILLIAM SAFIRE. *Doubleday. 1125 pp. $24.95.*

Reviewed by JAMES W. TUTTLETON

WILLIAM SAFIRE's new historical novel makes an imposing space for itself on the shelf of contemporary Civil War fiction. Covering the first two years of Lincoln's presidency, from the Inauguration in 1861 (and the Confederate firing on Fort Sumter) to the Emancipation Proclamation on New Year's Day in 1863, *Freedom* brings alive the political issues, the personal rivalries, and the battlefield tragedy that marked these critical years in American history.

Union and Confederate generals like George B. McClellan, U.S. Grant, and Robert E. Lee; Cabinet members like Salmon P. Chase, Edwin Stanton, and William Seward; and powerful Washington women like Anna Ella Carroll, Kate Chase, and the Confederate spy "Wild Rose" Greenhow make major appearances in the novel. Memorable minor roles are played by the detective Allan Pinkerton, the battlefield photographer Mathew Brady, the journalist Horace Greeley, and the Jewish chiropodist Isachar Zacharie, who served Lincoln as a courier in the South. And of course there is Lincoln himself—bent on preserving the Union at all costs, usurping (if that is what he did) the war powers of Congress, proclaiming military rule, restricting the civil liberties of antiwar dissidents, and manipulating the press and public opinion.

Walt Whitman said that the real war would never get into the books. Does *Freedom* capture it? Let me say at the outset that Safire's novel is a stunning demonstration of political and historical research. If you want to understand the push-pull of Civil War politics in Washington and Richmond and the personalities who pushed and pulled, Safire's novel tells more, and tells it more vividly, than most narrative histories of the period. This is not merely the consequence of the novel's size. Safire has an analyst's gift for defining the political issue, linking it to the hidden calculation of the actor, and dramatizing it in action. And his battlefield scenes, at Bull Run, Antietam, and Shiloh, offer realistic pictures of the terrible carnage produced by the Secession.

But it is power politics that most absorbs Safire. In his world there is no other rival passion, emphatically including the sexual kind. Although he offers us the (invented) love stories of Anna Carroll and Senator John Breckinridge, and of Kate Chase and John Hay, it is hard to believe in Safire's affairs of the heart, which anyway are always being interrupted *in flagrante delicto* by the wanderings of his protagonists' minds into the true arena of their lust, politics. For the reader, the effect is anaphrodisiacal, to say the least.

TO ANCHOR his novel in a sea of swirling facts, Safire provides the reader with a long appendix of 150 pages that he calls the "Underbook." There he presents the historical sources of his imagined scenes, confesses to what is real and what is invented, provides a bibliography of Civil War readings, and clarifies the debates of the historians over the political meaning of Civil War events. Repeatedly in this appendix we are told things like: "The interview with [Benjamin] Wade is fictional, but Lincoln's dialogue is taken from his letter to Orville Browning." Or "Some of my mind reading of [Salmon P.] Chase is fictional, and several meetings are telescoped into two, but on the whole the chapter is based on [Gideon] Welles's diary." Or "Fiction. That is what I think Lincoln was thinking in late May 1862." This stratagem, which allows us to discriminate between the actual and the invented, also delivers Safire from the charge of misleading readers and falsifying history for the sake of his plot.

But is the result historical truth? Since many readers are likely to get their information about the Civil War from novels like *Freedom* rather than from works of history, there is something ethically responsible about Safire's alerting us to where he deviates from the factual into the imaginary. In doing so, however, he is also implicitly acknowledging the legitimacy of the distinction, and paying obeisance as well to some ideal of historical truth which he as a novelist is trying to serve with no less devotion than would a professional historian. In all this Safire seems grandly oblivious to the attack, within the discipline of history itself, on the adequacy of *any* narrative history to tell the truth about the past.

For too many current historians, a historical narrative is itself a work of the imagination. An instance is the view of Hayden White of the University of California at Santa Cruz who complains in *Tropics of Discourse* (1978) that

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people are reluctant "to consider historical narratives as what they most manifestly are: verbal fictions, the contents of which are as much *invented* as *found* and the forms of which have more in common with their counterparts in literature than they have with those in the sciences." For historians like White, it is naive to "expect that statements about a given epoch or complex of events in the past 'correspond' to some preexistent body of 'raw facts.'" For White, *all* historians are novelists; and all history is an imaginary construction of found facts. Given such views, is it any wonder that the discipline of history is now collapsing into subjective ideologies and tending toward cognitive nihilism?

Luckily, Safire is innocent of this kind of academic skepticism. He may argue about the meaning of past events, but the existence of historical truth as such he never calls into question. Just as the responsible narrative history can tell a truthful story about the past, so the well-researched historical novel can recreate the continuity of intimate human relations, personal psychology, and public events. Happily indifferent to the inanities of current historical theory, Safire gets on with the task.

Freedom is divided into nine long books, each (except the one called "The Negro") devoted to a major character, each character a participant in the unfolding of political and military events that led Lincoln to propose the Emancipation Proclamation. Safire opens with John Cabell Breckinridge, the Kentucky Senator who held out against Lincoln's "usurpation" of constitutional liberties until events forced him to quit Washington and don the rebel gray. Anna Ella Carroll, who devised a brilliant military strategy for the Union army, gets a book of her own, as do Stanton, Grant, McClellan, Chase, and Lincoln. Curiously, only a handful of blacks appear in this novel: the question of their freedom is submerged in the abstract issue of the freedom of all American citizens, whose civil rights were put in jeopardy by Lincoln when he suspended habeas corpus and ordered the arbitrary arrest and imprisonment of anti-war dissidents.

Throughout each of the books, Safire superbly interconnects the Washington wheeling-and-dealing, the political jockeying for power, the adroit maneuvering of Lincoln to hold together the army, the government, and the country. This entry from the (fictional) diary of John Hay, Lincoln's secretary, aptly defines the President's seemingly impossible situation in 1862:

> Consider the position at this moment of the man trying to hold the country together: enemies in the field, on the march in two major offensives; enemies within the army, conniving to create a dictatorship or at least throw their weight to the Peace Democrats; enemies in the Cabinet, eager to supplant him at the next party convention; enemies in the Congress, plotting to snatch away his authority to run the war. Not to mention a wife crazy as a coot, now bringing in spiritualists to hold ghostly seances in the Mansion so she can speak to the dead [son] Willie. Sometimes it seems that the Prsdt has to fight a half-dozen wars at the same time; who can blame him for looking as if he wants to hang himself?

For all his virtues, however, Safire has little of what Henry James called "solidity of specification." Settings are often vague; the scenic properties are scant. We are not told enough about how rooms are furnished or given the atmosphere of specific locations. It is also difficult to visualize Safire's characters. (Some eighty photographs of the dramatis personae, many by Mathew Brady, illustrate the book and do help to evoke a mental picture.) The style —excessively cerebral—is frankly that of a journalist and political analyst, not that of a true novelist. The power struggles among Chase, Stanton, Seward, the Blair family, the generals, and others are handled not so much dramatically as by oration. Conversations quickly give way to overlong speeches that rehearse the conflicting policy positions of the antagonists. Despite Safire's mind-reading of Lincoln, the great President comes off as a shadowy figure. We know that his boots hurt his feet and that he carries his notes around in his stovepipe hat; we know that he likes the cornpone jokes of Artemus Ward and Petroleum V. Nasby. But Lincoln as a magisterial presence, Lincoln as a human being, simply does not come into focus.

One reason for Lincoln's elusiveness may be that Safire harbors a deep ambivalence about the President—indeed, he wants to demystify the Lincoln myth. Lincoln's

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distrust of General McClellan, who was fired for failing to prosecute the war vigorously enough, his deviousness with the divided cabinet, his manipulation of the press—all these, together with the clampdown on American civil liberties, make Lincoln in Safire's eyes less the national hero than a President who set a disastrously bad example. And he is not content just to let the novel show us this danger. In the "Underbook," we find openly argued the political reservations that inform Safire's fictional critique of Lincoln's imperial presidency. And it is here in the appendix that the quality of Safire's mind as a student of American history (and not incidentally Richard Nixon's former speechwriter) becomes apparent.

IT IS true that Lincoln adroitly exploited ambiguities in the constitutional separation of powers and the authority to conduct the war. Justifying his actions on the ground that Congress was not in session at the outbreak of hostilities and that the Constitution required him to act immediately to preserve "the public safety," Lincoln sidestepped Congress, jailed some 13,000 Americans without trial (many of them merely "Peace Democrats"), ignored the Supreme Court, and closed down a number of antiwar newspapers. One effect of his proclamation of military rule was to give any army officer the right to decide on the spot who was to be evacuated as a military threat or jailed without a trial. While initially only individual dissidents were at risk, one military order put a whole group under the gun. Because certain Jewish cotton traders (along with many Gentiles) were evidently profiteering and "stealing the army blind," General U.S. Grant issued a General Order expelling the Jews *as a class* from the Tennessee and Mississippi areas controlled by the armies of Grant and Sherman.

Luckily, Lincoln immediately countermanded the order. But the episode is a pointed illustration of what happened to American citizens under the military rule imposed by Lincoln. Safire therefore cannot take the view, frequently expressed by historians, that Lincoln's government acted with reasonable restraint in abridging the constitutional freedoms enjoyed by our citizens in peacetime:

> I disagree. The argument that times were tough, and a few thousand dissenters clapped in jail were no big deal in the midst of insurrection, misses the point of democracy under stress: insofar as a nation departs from its guarantees of civil liberty, it is less of a democracy.

It will not help to protest to Safire that a civil rebellion was under way, that McClellan was dithering, that the capture of Washington seemed imminent, and that Lee was moving into Pennsylvania. For Safire, the suspension of habeas corpus and the proclamation of military rule were never really necessary and did nothing to help win the war. He takes some satisfaction in the fact that the Supreme Court, in 1866, struck down as unconstitutional Lincoln's proclamation of military rule: "Martyred heroes come and go, but the rule of law wins in the end."

THE question comes down to how much disorder, how much anarchy, how much plain subversion a democracy can tolerate while a civil war is going on within its borders. Safire's is a respectable position, and many historians endorse it. Yet his character Anna Carroll makes a good case for the opposite position. She quotes Jefferson, who had lived through war and revolution, to this effect: "A strict observance of the written law is doubtless one of the highest duties of a good citizen, but it is not *the highest*. The laws of necessity, of self-preservation, of saving our country when in danger, are of higher obligation." Jefferson likewise remarked to J.B. Colvin, in December 1810 that "To lose our country by scrupulous adherence to written law would be to lose the law itself, with life, liberty, property, and all those who are enjoying them with us, thus absurdly sacrificing the end to the means."

Lincoln knew that in suspending habeas corpus and in proclaiming military rule he was putting postwar constitutional government at risk, supplying, in theory, a precedent for a later tyrant. But he was determined to preserve the Union at all costs, and the emancipation of blacks—proclaimed at just the right political moment—was an astute maneuver to reanimate the abolitionists and to mobilize flagging Northern support for the war. Lincoln said that he was "pleased to know that the present judgment of thoughtful men" about his harsh suspension of constitutional freedoms "is so generally in accord with what I believe the future will, without serious division, pronounce concerning it." Safire holds that Lincoln "was wrong about that," for division still exists.

Jefferson and Jackson, I think, would have approved of Lincoln's desperate remedy. But this just goes to show how serious an issue Safire has chosen to deal with in *Freedom*. To his own presentation of the argument in fictional form, we may apply one of Lincoln's favorite jokes: "As the girl said when she stuck her foot in the stocking, 'I think there's something in it.'"

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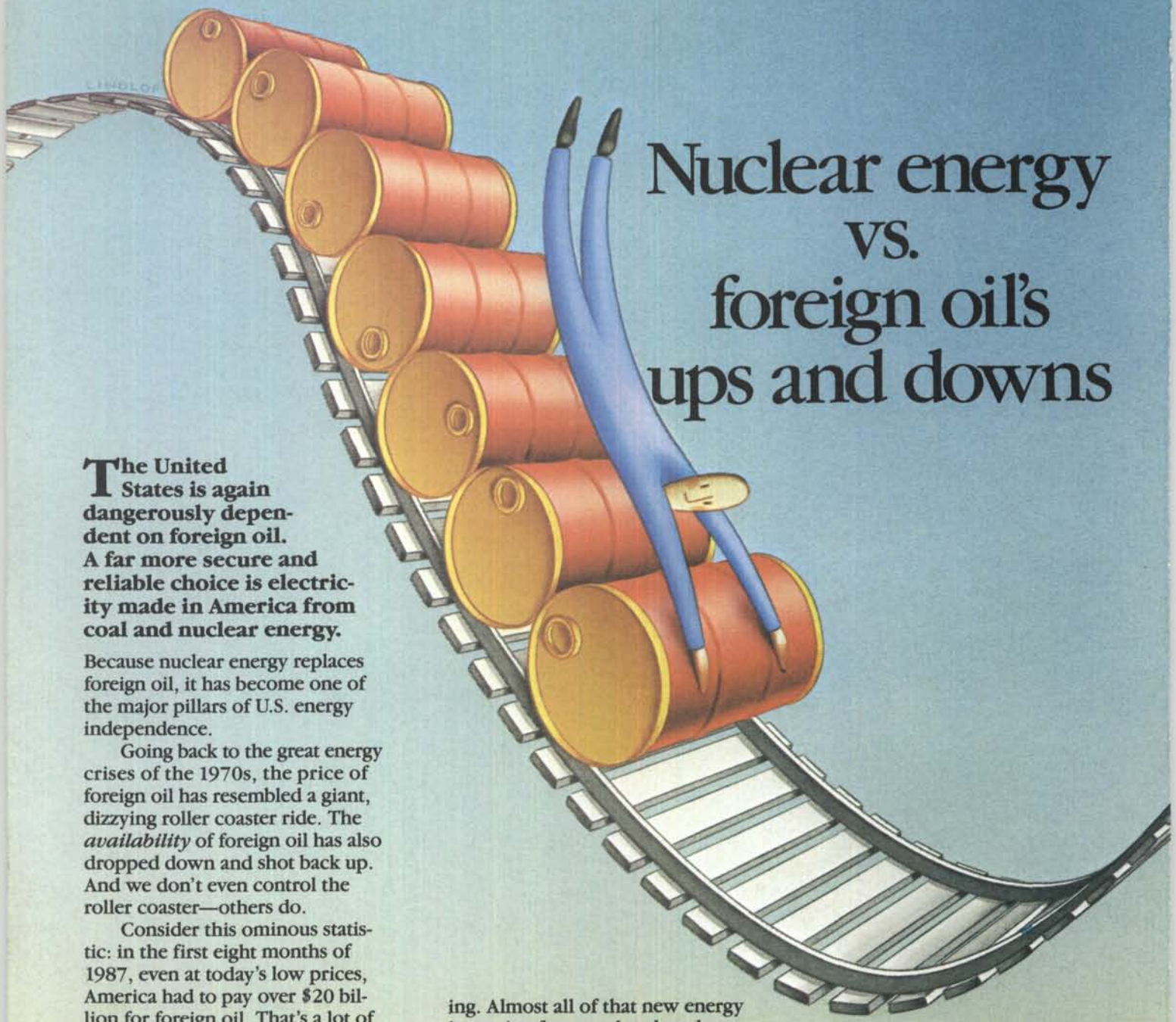

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